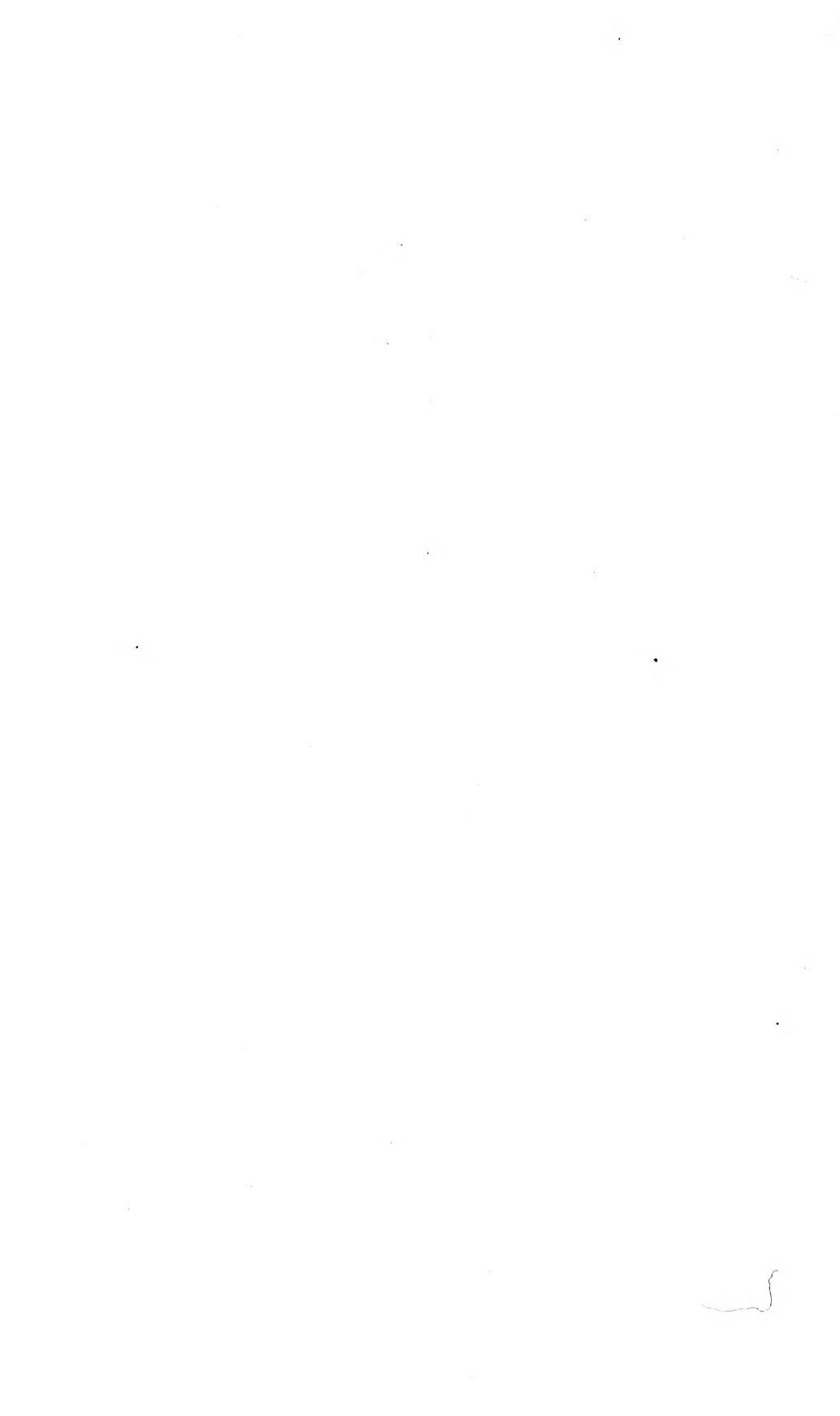


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JOHN GALSWORTHY : THE DRAMATIC ARTIST

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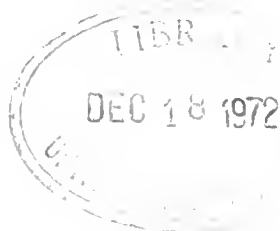
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CHAPTER I

1. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY DRAMA. — 2. THE COMING OF THE CHANGE. — 3. THE PLAYS OF JOHN GALSWORTHY.

The history of the English stage after Sheridan up to the end of the nineteenth century, is, to a great extent, a history of influences. From the Continent, from France mainly, came the impetus that several times urged English playwrights to effort and resulted in a thorough renovation of the national drama.

I

In France, for a century after the violent post-revolution dramas, the theatre went through a very quick succession of changes. The romantic plays, dealing with exceptional characters and often divorced from the social preoccupations of the time, frequently presented, for all their lyricism, external situations childishly complicated and unreal ; and being often inspired by a rebellious desire to reject artistic discipline, they were sometimes allowed to become, as was « *Hernani* », a disconnected succession of scenes linked together by no imperious necessity, conceived for the sake of some high lyrical numbers, very much like opera libretti. The elder Alexandre Dumas, already introduced, or re-introduced into the theatre, the ideal of the well-made play to which the public responded instinctively. Thereafter,

✓ the *pièce bien faite* held the stage for a long time, mainly with Scribe and, later, Sardou. In such works of art, or rather of technique, everything was patiently arranged in an intrigue that could be, after the first act, logically deduced from the initial situations and characters ; or, we should rather say, the situations and the puppets that were made to serve them. By 1860, after a few years of lachrymose performances, this formula became, with Sardou, then with Labiche, applied to a renovated type of comedy, although Sardou introduced into the drama reliance on elaborate mounting, pageantry, and a host of supernumeraries crowding up the stage ; while Labiche sacrificed the sacrosanct principle of unity to social and moral satire. Anyhow, the French public had been educated into the love and respect of minute dramatic technique which corresponded with a national propensity to logicity, from which its liberation, later, was to be a hard task.

Together with this lasting interest taken in dramatic construction, the next stage in the evolution was to be marked with a definite tendency to sermonizing. Scribe, for all the attention he gave to external architecture, delivered some criticism of life in his work. The younger Dumas, well trained in technique by his father, at the same time had a very serious conception of the stage ; writing strong dramas, he also wanted them to be good for the soul. After him, naturalism eclipsed the thesis play for a time ; the new school of playwriting and play-acting owed much to the novel of the period ; it made rather light of the plot, even going so far as to replace the acts by *tableaux*, which were slices of life ; it declared itself realistic, meaning that it did not shrink from representing the commonest and the least savoury sides of life ; with all its exaggeration and weaknesses, it purged the theatre from much staginess, and the dramatic plot from much artificiality. It also paved the way to a bolder choice of social themes, and renewed the dramatic outlook on the subject of sex, all of which changes made themselves felt when, after this eclipse, the problem play reappeared with Brieux and others.

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Meanwhile, by 1880, Ibsen had been acted in France and, from the first, violently criticized by Francisque Sarcey in the name of the *pièce bien faite*. His theatre was bringing both a social lesson and a new technique, and even a modern type of tragedy by turning to use the ill-balanced conflict between the individual soul and will, and the obscure social forces engendered by our civilization; the problems he set upon the stage he faced with an almost unbelievable mixture of emotion and analytical insight. He sacrificed neither the ideas nor the pathos, neither plots and situation, nor characters; and he disclosed the poignant spiritual dramas underlying the humdrum appearance of uneventful existences. This meant, of course, new stark realism inseparable from symbol; a new technique with a new treatment of the crisis; a new form of dialogue, for Ibsen's philosophy was not conveyed by sermons, but by the profound vibrations arising from commonplace remarks. His plays, remarkable for their sombre intensity attained through exacting discipline and for their arresting combination of the active and the contemplative, performed in an atmosphere of moral reprobation and artistic enthusiasm, were to act as an inspiration to several countries of Western Europe. The symbolist, intellectual, realistic and social dramas, and that of the *tragique quotidien* owe much to Ibsen's influence, even though this was indirectly felt or yielded to unwittingly. Neither Strindberg, with the wide gamut of his genius, ranging from the well-made play to the naturalistic play and from misogynic realism to mysticism, nor Björnsen, for all his power allied with lucidity, nor the Russian dramatists, exercised any comparable influence.

The *théâtre libre* in France, although due primarily to the go-ahead spirit of some devoted pioneers, experimentalists and prospectors in drama, was connected with the naturalistic, the Ibsenite and the social theatre movements. It developed a new school of acting, suited to realistic plays, without ranting, oratory, or elaborate scenery, endeavouring to show life on the stage, and to make the actors serve the work of the playwright. It

gathered enlightened audiences for dramas whose unconventionality of ideas and technique might not, at the outset, have been welcomed by the general public. And it enriched the stage by introducing to spectators, producers, critics and writers, many new and foreign plays that might otherwise have long remained unknown and therefore sterile.

II

In England, after Sheridan, the drama remained at a low level of production. English playwrights were few and their work was uninteresting. When, in 1843, the theatre became open to public enterprise, this, instead of making for higher quality, rather confirmed it in its insignificance by turning it, mainly, into nothing better than a coarse form of popular entertainment. All serious matter it studiously avoided, contenting itself with heavy punning, laborious jesting, and vulgar intrigues that generally involved ridiculous pairs of lovers. Side by side with these farcical plays, there existed melodramas of the worst type, historical and others. For this, the influence of the French post-revolution plays and romantic dramas was, no doubt, partly responsible. But the defect lay chiefly in the quality of the public themselves, who, when they did not go to a theatre in order to guffaw at some grotesque blundering, at least expected to have their elemental emotions stirred by the crudest means, by which they allowed themselves to be carried away, despite the complete lack of verisimilitude in situations and characters, and the absence of any serious idea. This *genre* was long in dying out, and still flourished between the years 1880 and 1890 and even afterwards, when the Surrey-side continued to offer to opprobrium the wicked lord and the vampire-lady.

During the whole of that time, very few serious writers turned to the theatre. The dignified form of fiction was the novel. The only plays produced, worthy

of any notice, were those of Robertson, who, by choice of characters, scenic details, and even seriousness of purpose, aimed at creating the illusion of life on the stage. There had always been a realistic current in English literature, and with Robertson and with the « cup and saucer comedy » of the seventies, this realism coloured the drama. Thanks to it, the stage was purged from some of its theatricality, stage-production showed definite improvement, and dramatic literature began to gain in verisimilitude and humanity. The influence of Robertson was not entirely lost ; it was to show some years later, even in the plays of Pinero and of Henry Arthur Jones. But the works of his immediate followers lacked vigour and literary quality, the impetus given soon exhausted itself, and Robertson's own attempt at mild realism did not compete very successfully with the imported well constructed, effective work, of Victorien Sardou.

As for the Shakespearian revival at the hands of Henry Irving, during and after the sixties, it probably suffered too from having to appeal to a public of farce and melodrama ; although it helped to pick up the threads of a high dramatic tradition, the declamatory ranting of the Irving school was not well calculated to deliver the stage from its artificiality.

Nevertheless, Robertson and Henry Irving were already unmistakable signs that the drama would soon begin to recover from the low condition into which it had fallen. And there were others too, more and more apparent as time went on, besides the newly born taste for reality and for Shakespeare. The traditional French repertoire was getting exhausted, and the French theatre, on the other hand, was undergoing profound changes. English audiences displayed less prejudice against presentation of ideas upon the stage ; education laws played their part in bringing about this altered attitude, the general movement of thought ventilated many topics which had long been forbidden, and, under the pressure of historical development, people became more widely conscious of social questions. Newspaper criticism took a more

serious view of the theatre. Indeed several groups of constructive critics were to follow one another within twenty years, as well as several groups of playwrights.

The first critics who played an active part in this late nineteenth century renaissance defined the reasons for the decadence of the English theatre, and looked for remedies. Already in 1879, Matthew Arnold made the absence of some homogeneous view of life responsible for the contemporary insignificance of the national drama. Sir Henry Arthur Jones, in innumerable lectures and articles, deplored the fall of spiritual and artistic interest that had left the general public nothing but the ideal of the *pièce bien faite*, or the brainless enjoyment of low comedy, buffoonery and elaborate mounting. The French, he said, train their actors and value their playwrights, whose works do not suffer, like ours, from a penury of ideas, but rather from an excess of them. While in England, he added, « the great mass
« of playgoers have lost all sense that the drama is the
« art of representing life, and go to the theatre mainly
« to be awed by scenery, or to be tickled by funny
« antics and songs and dances that have no relation to
« life, and merely provide a means of wasting the
« evening in entertainments not far removed from
« idiocy » (1). One of the reasons for this low level of taste was, besides laziness of mind, a form of religious complex, which made it repellent to many, to see serious questions thrashed out in as frivolous a place as a theatre; this puritanical attitude was perpetuated by the censorship which, originally created to deal with political attacks against Walpole, had come to exercise

(1) « In England, we have no modern drama at all. Our vast
« society is not homogeneous enough, not sufficiently united, even
« any large portion of it, in a common view of life, a common
« ideal capable of serving as a basis for a modern English
« drama. » (Matthew Arnold, *Nineteenth Century Review*, August
1879). The lines by Henry Arthur Jones appeared in *The
Fortnightly Review*, December 1906 (« *Corner Stones of Modern
Drama* », pp. 1086-1087). Much more recently, in his stimulating
little book on dramatic aesthetics, « *Dionysos : apologie pour le
Théâtre* » (Paris 1938), Pierre Aimé Touchard again remarked :
« C'est une loi incontestable que les périodes de mise en scène
« fastueuse ont toujours coïncidé avec les périodes de décadence
« théâtrale. »

a religious and moral control. To this must be added the fact that the stage was commercialized and the drama consequently standardized, that the actor-manager pandered to the public's lowest taste and willingly accepted any play that was likely to draw a large audience (however low), and to afford some scope for a star performance. Many of these grievances were voiced by Bernard Shaw and by subsequent critics and authors in the nineteenth century, and as late as 1906, St. John Hankin still complained in the « *Fortnightly Review* » that the stage was suffering from the narrowness of mind of two categories of persons, the religious puritan and the intellectual puritan or prig, who both considered, for different reasons, that a theatrical performance was unworthy of their presence. And naturally, the producers were trying to please the only public that came to the playhouse..... and that paid.

In short, Sir Henry Arthur Jones denounced seven causes for the lamentable state of affairs which he so strongly deplored, all of them closely allied. And these were : the separation of drama from literature and the contempt in which it was held by the critics, the authors, and educated people ; its separation from all other arts, owing to which it was denied any claim to spiritual value ; the absence from it of any sane, consistent, intelligible ideas about morality ; its identification with low classes of popular amusements, without any high standards or noble traditions ; the want of training-schools for actors ; the incompetence of the star performers for whom plays were written ; the managers' preference for adaptations of foreign plays, less expensive in royalties. In consequence, the critic defined as follows the « corner-stones of the new drama » : 1) the recognition of the drama as the highest and most difficult form of literature ; 2) the acknowledged right of the dramatist to deal with the serious problems of life ; 3) the severance of the drama from popular entertainment ; 4) the establishment of « new relations » between actors and authors. At some other time he described the rôle of the theatre as being to teach pleasantly,

spontaneously, the great rules of life, or to make human passion and character visible in action ; insisted on the vital importance of religious subjects ; protested against the reducing of the drama to cheap trickery in the handling of situations and curtains ; recommended the publication of plays as a safeguard against the production of despicable rubbish ; and advised playwrights to remain in contact with life and to refrain from fogging or boring their audiences (2).

As well as being a critic, Henry Arthur Jones was a prolific original writer who composed some twenty-five plays in twenty-six years. These, which he called « studies in English life », were concerned with the inner truths of existence, occasionally facing very difficult questions ; they displayed some genuinely realistic qualities and, in the dialogue, touches of healthy cynicism. — Henry Arthur Jones's name is generally coupled with that of Pinero, the author of so many farces, sentimental comedies and serious dramas, concerned more with the human heart than with social problems. Pinero displayed genuine feeling for his women-characters, who, according to his own theories, should be shown as probable types in possible situations, their sentiments and weaknesses being magnified for the stage. This author's cleverly constructed dramas, direct and symmetrical, appear endowed with real power of emotion, partly due to the very depth of the irony ; or sometimes even, later in his career, they verge upon the real theatre of ideas. These plays, moreover, bristling with stage directions, made absolutely « actor-proof », he eventually had printed. — About the same period, too, Mrs Lyttleton for once steered clear of the drama of amorous insignificance and essayed social and economic questions with « Warp and Woof ». — And some poets, Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, wrote poetic dramas, which were more poetry than drama and

(2) « *The Renascence of the English Drama* » by Henry Arthur Jones (London, 1895) : see Preface and *The Future of the English Drama* (pp. 125-132). Also : « *Corner Stones of Modern Drama* » (*The Fortnightly Review*, December 1906, pp. 1084-1095).

eventually proved unactable or uninteresting on the stage.

All these attempts to link the theatre with life on one side, with dignified art and literature on the other, were partly marred by timidities, inadequate technique, or faithfulness to some of the very traditions they sought to combat. — « Warp and Woof » is, as a propaganda play, inconclusive through superficial and exaggerated treatment. — Henry Arthur Jones objected to being called a realist, because he considered that the stage was no place for the display of the ugliness on which those attached to superficial « truthfulness to life » insisted ; he shirked the logical *dénouements* of his plays, always preferring milk-and-water conclusions, and he never squarely faced the problem of sex, always obscuring it with a flow of cheap sentimentality. — Pinero, too, lacked philosophical as well as psychological breadth, and disliked too brutal conclusions. — Both, on the other hand, showed traces of exploded methods, Henry Arthur Jones, spoilt by the earlier writing of melodrama, in the embryonic crudeness of his tangle of styles and themes ; Pinero, in the exaggerations of sentiment, stagey heaviness of dialogue, conventional, uneconomical technique partial to big effects lengthily prepared, to forced situations and to the antiquated devices of the *pièce bien faite*. All, moreover, still wrote for stars and actor-managers, and, at the same time as they deplored it, submitted to the commercialism which they elsewhere denounced.

Among this first generation of critics and playwrights, we hardly ever find both interesting dramatic art and interesting ideas united in any one piece of work. Moreover, for all their call for new drama, these writers were lacking in the spirit of experimentation and of real iconoclasm. The foreign influences at work upon them, along with that of the traditional British melodrama, were those of the *pièce bien faite* and the *pièce morale*. But the new team that stands on the very threshold of the twentieth century repudiates cant and technical conformity. Its members are inspired with

the flame of rebellion on behalf of the individual against society, on behalf of independent art against commercialism and moral interdictions, on behalf of life itself and truth, pleasant or unpleasant, against false ethical and aesthetic values, and false sentimentality. Their work is socially minded, and, moreover, they do not consider the problem of means and technique apart from the problem of purpose : unwilling as they are both to put new wine into old bottles and to manufacture new bottles merely for old wine, however mellowed by time, to be poured into them. They soon need no longer fight to raise the drama from among the lower forms of popular amusement, although intellectual snobs persist in despising it ; but they have still to free it from some of the same obstacles that confronted Henry Arthur Jones and Pinero : the actor-manager and the long-run system, the institution of the censorship, and the public's prejudice against some problems of life being openly discussed on the stage (3). In them are manifest the influences of the French naturalist drama, social drama

(3) See : « *Puritanism and the English Stage* » by St. John HANKIN (*The Fortnightly Review*, December 1906, pp. 1055-1065). Also « *Drama and Life* » par A. B. WALKLEY (London, 1907) : Modern English and French Drama, some French and English plays, Laws of Change, etc..... Galsworthy himself wrote in a letter to Mr. Kenneth Andrews (December 30, 1922) : « I never « had any apprentice years..... till, in February and March 1906, « I wrote *The Silver Box*, being at the time in a mood of revolt at « the artificiality of such plays as I had seen... » and in a letter to Dr Sadasiva Aiyar (August 23, 1925) : « My dramatic invasion, « and the form of it, was dictated rather by revolt at the artificial « nature of the English play of that period and by a resolute « intention to present real life on the stage ». On the other hand, he took an active part in the 1907-1909 crusade against censorship, published a pamphlet : « *A Justification of the Censorship of Plays* » (when Bernard Shaw's « *Blanco Posnet* » was censored on the eve of production), and declared in his evidence when he appeared as a witness before a Parliamentary Committee which had met in order to consider the matter : «I « have also to state that I have read the plays » (censored or warned off by the Censor) « *The (Edipus Rex (Sophocles) ; The Cenci (Shelley) ; Monna Vanna (Maeterlinck) ; Ghosts (Ibsen) ; Maternité (Brieux) ; The three Daughters of M. Dupont (Brieux) ; Mrs Warren's Profession (Shaw) ; Waste (Barker) ; The Breaking Point (Garnett) ; Bethlehem (Housman) »*. The whole campaign, like several others started before against the censorship, had no practical result. See : « *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy* » by H. V. MANNOR (London, 1935), pp. 789, 793, 216-7.

and symbolist movement, that of the *Théâtre Libre* movement, as well as that of the Scandinavian and Russian playwrights.

Whilst Henry Arthur Jones and Pinero were asking for the rise of a national drama, the new group, inspired by Antoine's example in Paris, gravitated round various attempts, many of which were successful, to establish some *scènes à côté*, free from commercial, official and puritanical tyranny. They were helped in this by the efforts of enthusiastic amateurs, actors and producers, gathered in dramatic societies and Sunday societies (to fight the censorship), repertory theatres (to fight the long-run system), and little theatres (experimental) : all of which served to lengthen the list of interesting foreign plays shown in England, tempted the regular managers out of the beaten track to explore farther afield, and promoted the writing of new, original British dramas. In addition to these, the Irish Theatre of Dublin must not be overlooked.

The first practical effect of the new drama movement was the creation of Grein's Independent Theatre, which lasted from 1891 to 1897, and antagonized many by the nature of the plays it produced : Grein claimed for a time the honour of being the best-hated man in London. The Stage Society (1899-1917), a repertory company, continued the Independent Theatre's task of pioneering and experimenting. The society owned no house of its own, and the first of the twenty-six new plays which it ventured to put on was performed in 1899 at the Royalty ; by 1907 it had become prosperous and really influential. Also, in 1904, the Court Theatre had begun its career under Vedrenne and Granville Barker, the latter having already written and acted for the Stage Society since 1899. Intending to compete with the commercial playhouses, and to act as a corrective to the long-run system, this management produced with financial success twenty-five plays within two years, an achievement made possible by a daring go-ahead spirit, genuine team work on the part of good actors, and simple mounting involving little expense. When he left

the Court Theatre, Granville Barker went to the Savoy, to which he gave a fresh impetus. Since that time, the enterprises of the New Theatre movement have been many, and frequently successful.

All these newly launched theatrical ventures ran, as a rule, a double danger. One was that of merely specializing in the production of foreign works : this menace was lessened after George Moore had written, for a wager, « The Strike at Arlingford », and Bernard Shaw had, in 1893, resumed and happily brought to a conclusion for Grein's theatre the discarded manuscript of « Widowers' Houses ». The other was that of falling under the complete influence of Bernard Shaw himself and sacrificing genuine technical experiments to social and socialistic purposes ; this too was avoided when more and more writers rallied round the movement, bringing to it their various and varied contributions. The interesting phalanx was, in the main, initially made up of Ibsenites, both critics and playwrights ; it included Whitley, William Archer, Edmund Gosse, Beerbohm Tree, Bernard Shaw, etc..., and, of course, Granville Barker. It will be remembered that William Archer and Edmund Gosse had a most decisive influence in introducing Ibsen to the English public in the early nineties, and G. B. Shaw in drawing the lesson of this work in his « Quintessence of Ibsenism » (4).

Ibsen acted in England as a stimulus rather than as an example for servile imitation. While the Irish dramatists achieved a happy synthesis of realism, symbolism and poetry, the English, save for a few very

(4) Edmund Gosse : « *Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe* », 1879. G. B. Shaw : « *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* », 1891. Henry Arthur Jones : « *The Renaissance of the English Drama* », 1895. William Archer and Granville Barker : « *A National Theatre, Scheme and Estimates* », 1907. A. B. Walklev : « *Drama and Life* », 1907. About this question and what follows, see also « *The English Stage of To-day* » by Marco Borsa (London, 1908), a very uneven piece of historical criticism, — and, a much more substantial study and higher achievement, ending with a good bibliographical list, « *Le Court Théâtre (1904-1914) et l'évolution du théâtre anglais contemporain* » by Irving Zucken (Paris, 1931). « *The Independent Theatre in Europe from 1887 to the Present* » by Anna Irene Müller (New-York, 1931), is a valuable work, containing a very comprehensive, up to date bibliography on the whole question.

literary dramas such as those of Stephen Phillips and Thomas Hardy, frequently wrote for a definite social purpose and appealed by choice to intelligence and thought. In reaction against pure sentimentalism, they stuck to realism, at least for some years, and to their minds realism meant the acceptance for art-representation of both the unpleasant and more ordinary aspects of life. Hence a not infrequent tone of pessimism, despairing and cynical, and the placing on the stage of everyday life-like characters, whose inmost depths were probed and analysed, rather than of superhuman figures and strained situations. Along with this, they made a systematic study of drama, rejecting many time-honoured authorities and conventions. They shook off the Aristotelian discipline and, in particular, all pretence of respecting the law of external unity : nearly professing that genius stood above all laws and ought to manifest itself in total liberty. They departed from the tradition of the noble hero and romantic love story with the happy ending ; they renounced much of the old trickery, formal expositions and cheap, heavy effects, and also, in many instances, the strong *dénonements* so absurdly artificial in view of the continuity and apparent insignificance of life's physical events. On the stage itself the star was replaced by a homogeneous set of players with well-balanced parts, who put themselves at the service of the play, acting as much as talking, natural in gesture and words, moving amidst simple mountings, and without much leaning towards spectacular *tableaux*.

Except for Pinero, Barrie, and a very few others, all of the playwrights who enjoyed some fame in the first years of the twentieth century were or had been connected with this new-theatre movement ; so were Alfred Sutro, who, after translating Maeterlinck, became spoilt by commercialism ; Oscar Wilde, whose hedonism and cynical humour contributed so much towards ridding the drama of cant and sham sentimentality, as well as lightening comedy dialogue ; St. John Hankin, pure of propagandist intentions, a master of the intellectual analysis of human motives. When a reaction had set in

against extreme realism, several among the early writers of the group (Shaw with « Androcles », Granville Barker with his farce « Roccoco », Galsworthy with « The Little Dream » and « The Pigeon »), turned towards the imaginative play, so delightfully handled by that charming and delicate artist, James Barrie. Among the first, in importance as well as in time, stood the pioneers Bernard Shaw and Granville Barker. Shaw the dramatic critic and, in his plays, the life critic, proved a staunch supporter of the theory of *l'art pour la vie*, and his dramas appear to be conceived for propaganda and inspired by socialistic ideas. With him, technique comes definitely, and increasingly so as time goes on, second to purpose ; realistic and argumentative, his work is a continuous protest against the ideal of the *pièce bien faite* ; intelligence and satire replace sentiment, and nothing could be more negative of emotion than the paradoxical attitude here systematically adopted. The message is delivered too clearly, and fully discussed and enlarged upon in inexhaustible wrangling ; but for a few exceptions like « The Devil's Disciple », the incidents are rare, and what incidents there are, appear in simple anecdotic succession, while the characters stand transparently as specimens, not as substantial individuals ; the author's personality is forcibly intruded upon us, in long prefaces and stage directions, as well as in the speeches of the *dramatis personæ*. As play succeeds play, this propensity is more and more provocatively indulged in, until all pretension to dramatic structure and dramatic division into acts is forsaken ; the dialogue develops into a flow of argumentative speeches, from which conclusions themselves are left out, and the play becomes a postscript to the preface. Emphatically this kind of drama soon grew to be more suitable for reading than for acting ; which in no wise means that it does not make good reading and did not exercise an enormous influence.

Granville Barker, on the contrary, for all his intellectual attitude, wrote first and foremost for the stage, in simple unaffected language, realistic and suited to the

idiosyncracies of well analyzed characters. The ideas and the theme at the root of the play are broad enough to pertain to philosophy rather than social propaganda ; they are implied in a general atmosphere of emotion, not expressed in so many words ; and the unity is one of tone, style and motif. Some innovations in technique, together with the tragic breadth of emotion, sombre atmospheric qualities, and gradual development of human persons, lend additional interest to these dramas. And the sobriety of effects, the quiet *dénouements*, are calculated to produce an impression of great art. As a playwright as well as a producer, Granville Barker could be an inspiring force.

Such were the writers with whom, as a dramatist, Galsworthy was connected. His « Silver Box » was first staged at the Court Theatre in 1906, and hailed as a very fine product of the new school of drama. In 1908 « Joy » was staged at the Savoy and « Strife » at the Queen's, both under the Granville Barker management, and in 1910 « Justice » was performed at the Duke of York's, under Charles Frohman, and later, again, under Granville Barker. Very soon, moreover, Galsworthy's plays were to figure among those that crossed the Atlantic and appeared on the stages of the American advanced theatre.

III

The literary career of John Galsworthy may be said to have had its beginning in front of the railway bookstall at the Paris *Gare du Nord* in the Easter week of 1895. For it was there, in the course of a conversation with the lady who was later to become his wife, that she suggested to him that he ought to write, since he had all the makings of a literary artist (5). But for such a

(5) See MARROT : « *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy* » (p. 101) : « It was at the Gare du Nord in Easter Week 1895, before « a bookstall, where he was seeing Ada and her mother off, Ada « asked " Why don't you write ? You're just the person ", »

suggestion, from someone who had considerable influence over him, we wonder whether Galsworthy's talent would ever have developed ; he did not come of a literary or artistic stock and there had been nothing very much in his earlier years leading one to suspect a youthful genius for letters. Galsworthy was twenty-eight at the time he began to think of writing, and until then had led the ordinary normal life of a young man coming from a sound upper middle-class family. He had been at Harrow and Oxford, and had done all the correct things in the way of games and sport that correct young men of upper, middle-class English families usually do. His home life had been untroubled, his school and college days healthy and cheerful ; he had been an eminently satisfactory student, a little serious-minded perhaps, and with a high sense of responsibility (6), but there had been no marked brilliancy to single him out from among his fellows and to give rise to uneasy qualms in the minds of his superiors. In later years his own advice to aspiring authors was emphatically that they should not begin too young — live first, then write (7). That enrichment of his emotional and spiritual being that can only come with personal and intimate experience of life is, he maintained, the essential

(6) Marrot, having described the days at Harrow (*op. cit.*, pp. 37-47), proceeds to draw a portrait of Galsworthy as an Oxford student (pp. 59-67), silent, reserved, rather superior, even slightly cynical, the man of a small circle, gifted with a sense of humour ; in fact (pp. 59-60) : « succinctly outlined in the opening lines of « *A Sad Affair* : " An amiable youth of fair scholarship and « athletic attainments, and more susceptible to emotions, aesthetic « and otherwise, than most young barbarians, he went up a little « intoxicated on the novels of Whyte Melville. From continually « reading about whiskered dandies, garbed to perfection and « imperiously stoical in the trying circumstances of debt and « discomfiture, he had come to the conclusion that to be whiskered « and unmoved by fortune was quite the ultimate hope of « existence. There was something not altogether ignoble at the « back of this creed ". »

(7) In 1924, Galsworthy having reviewed, in « *The Triad* », the years of his life from 1895 to 1905, concludes that even at twenty-eight he was too young to begin writing : « To begin young is a mistake. Live first, write afterwards ». Again and again he insisted upon it. See MARROT, *op. cit.*, pp. 137, 555, 778, etc..... Also : « *John Galsworthy ; le Romancier* », by Ed. GUYOT (Paris, 1933), pp. 162 and following.

equipment of any writer who is to prove worthy of the name. Galsworthy held the opinion that he himself was too raw when he began, and allowing even for the improved technique which follows years of apprenticeship, the superiority of his later work — after the trying years between 1895 and 1904 — bears out this belief.

On the other hand, that conversation at the Paris railway station probably came at the right psychological moment as far as Galsworthy personally was concerned. The seed fell on soil well suited to receive it, soil which was waiting, as it were, for seed to be sown. For the idea of writing provided him with two things of which he stood in dire need at the time — a purpose and an outlet. Hitherto, his life had been the easy, rather aimless existence of a young man who has no need to worry very greatly about material things, nor had he been possessed by any absorbing passion, either for leading forlorn hopes or exploring polar regions. Then came his friendship with Mrs Ada Galsworthy and the unhappy years before their marriage became possible. Here indeed was the absorbing passion, but it was to be for long a frustrated one. Had circumstances fallen out otherwise, Galsworthy might never perhaps have become a writer, and in any case it is more than a probability that the « Forsyte Saga » would never have seen the light of day.

Be it as it may, once the idea took root in his mind, he set about fitting himself for a writer's career with singular steadfastness. In after years he gave it as his opinion that writing was a profession which almost anyone could master in time, providing he had sufficient perseverance to stick at it for long enough (8). At the same time, one feels that allowance must be made, in

(8) He even went as far as denying the importance of all technique. In the above-mentioned summary of past years (see preceding note) he also wrote : « Some writers at least are not « born... He who is determined to write and has the grit to see « the job through can get there in time... » In a discussion with James Boyd, he declared that « he considered too much attention « was paid by young authors to technique » (MARBOT, p. 565).

this rather sweeping statement, for the modesty of its author, for it is to be doubted whether the most fervent will-to-write, coupled with the utmost determination and doggedness, will suffice in themselves alone to produce the complete writer. Doubtless in Galsworthy the predisposition and talent were already there, though latent, when he set himself with so much earnestness to attain the mastery of his art. From the beginning until the end of his career, his unflagging industry and painstaking scrupulousness of detail never relaxed ; his manuscripts were revised again and again, whole books were rewritten, not once but many times (9) ; the dominant note in all his work is its unswerving sincerity, not only artistically, but even down to very minor practical details (10). If genius be the infinite capacity for taking pains, Galsworthy's right to be ranked as a genius cannot be disputed.

His first book was published in 1897. « From the

(9) For instance, « The Island Pharisees » was written three times over. (See MARROR, p. 133). By the end of 1911, the eleventh revision of « The Fugitive » and the seventh revision of « The Pigeon » were completed. (MARROR, p. 310).

(10) His whole correspondence is a proof of this « professional » conscientiousness. Galsworthy was fortunate in having excellent friends, enlightened, ungrudging and lucid. Their criticisms must have proved invaluable to him ; how much did he owe to such correspondents as Edward Garnett and Professor Gilbert Murray, who spared no trouble in discussing his work with him, and winning him over to their view if they deemed he had been mistaken in some incident of a plot or in some piece of dialogue ? He himself was most amenable to such advice, and, for his own part, neglected no detail, however trifling. His writing of « Justice » was preceded by numerous visits to prisons and careful studying of the problem of solitary confinement (MARROR, pp. 248-254). When proposing to end « The Fugitive » with Clare's suicide, he consulted his doctor as to the uses and effects of certain poisons (MARROR, p. 370). In a letter written in April, 1910, he gratefully acknowledged some technical inaccuracies in « Justice » to a correspondent who had written to him about it, assuring him that « Distrusting my own knowledge..... I put my « second act before a lawyer with great knowledge ; unfortunately « he omitted to call my attention to those points. I shall go « down this very morning and remedy the first and third of your « points... » (MARROR, p. 263). On June 11, 1924, he sent a letter to the Rev. John Hedley, and, not without a touch of gentle irony, promises to change the name of « Confucius » to « Chinese dog » in the rest of the « White Monkey » serial, lest this irreverent naming of Fleur Mont's pèkinese might hurt the feelings of some Chinese reader (MARROR, p. 517).

Four Winds », a collection of ten stories, mainly consisted of recollections of his travels, though one among them springs directly from the intimate personal experience of the author. This book was to be followed in 1898 by « Jocelyn », by « Villa Ruben » in 1900, « A Man of Devon » in 1901, and « Island Pharisees » in 1904. With « The Man of Property » in 1906 Galsworthy was definitely established in the front rank of contemporary English novelists, and the same year saw the writing and production of « The Silver Box ».

Although « The Silver Box » was his first completed drama, it was not quite the author's first use of the dramatic medium. As far back as 1901 he had begun work on a play to be called « The Civilised », but the project had to be abandoned, for the field he was attempting to cover was too vast for the restricted limits of a drama. Against a background of social satire, the main theme was the tragedy of a marriage made unhappy by incompatibility of temperaments — the very stuff indeed of which the main fabric of Galsworthian literature was subsequently to be woven. After repeated revising and re-drafting, Galsworthy probably came to see that he was trying to put too many eggs into one basket, that no actable play could support the weight of all he wanted to convey ; anyhow, « The Civilised » was put aside, and we have instead the two novels, « The Island Pharisees » and « The Man of Property », which contain much of its substance ; in 1910 the theme of the unhappy marriage was to be taken up again in « The Fugitive ».

But for this single exception, Galsworthy, until 1906, had written nothing for the stage : he had made no study of dramatic technique and of the complicated exigencies of the theatre, nor was he even a very ardent playgoer. In his letter to Mr. Kenneth Andrews he makes this very clear : « I never had any apprentice years, I never had anything at all to do with the theatre till — in February and March 1906 — I wrote « The Silver Box »..... You imply very kindly that I am a master of stage-craft. I'm sure I don't know if

« That's true, but, if it is, I have gradually muddled out
 « a mastery for myself. I am in no sense a student of
 « drama, nor a great playgoer... » (11). It is not difficult to conceive, however, that when Galsworthy did go to a theatre, very little would escape him, either in the conduct of the play, or in the reactions of the audience. With the artist's sensitiveness to atmosphere, he would instinctively appraise the responsiveness of the public to a given situation, would, so to speak, have his finger on its pulse, while, with his quickened powers of observation, he would seize and appreciate at their just value many of the finer subtleties of stage-craft liable to be lost upon the average playgoer who, to use his own time-honoured phrase, only goes to the theatre to be amused (12).

In constant intercourse with men like Barrie, Granville Barker and Shaw, who, as we have mentioned, were campaigning for a revival of the English drama and a cleansing of the theatrical Augean stables, Galsworthy wanted a higher standard of drama and acting in England, with serious dramatic criticism to stimulate both playwrights and actors. Then, towards the end of 1905, Edward Garnett suggested his writing a play for the Vedrenne-Barker management, which was at the time making history in London ; but Galsworthy, who was finding himself increasingly at home in the novel, was reluctant to desert this form of fiction, so that Garnett's proposal was rejected. Or, at any rate, matters went no further for the moment, but Galsworthy must — perhaps subconsciously — have dallied with the idea until it possessed him, for a very little later, in February 1906, he started on « The Silver Box », completing it within six weeks. It was promptly accepted and the following September saw it produced at the Court Theatre. The author himself said that in

(11) December 10, 1922. (Mannor, pp. 790-791).

(12) Galsworthy seems to have been conscious of such ability ; on July 13, 1905, he writes to Ed. Garnett : « Heard from Conrad. « Shaw seems to have endorsed his play. Why don't you spur « the Speaker to consistent dramatic criticism, and to giving the « post to you and me ? I believe we could make them sit up, « authors and actors. How is your play ? » (Mannor, p. 179).

writing his play he was actuated by the desire to give the theatre-going public something rather better than the lamentable fare then pretty generally offered to it, and the suddenness with which « *The Silver Box* » was begun and finished tempts one to indulge in the fancy picture of Galsworthy sitting down at his desk in a healthy fit of exasperation, determined to try and clear up a state of affairs that had gone on much too long and must now be put an end to.

Once he was launched on the double career of novelist and playwright, his activity was enormous ; novels, plays and critical studies were poured forth in a broad, rich stream ; before one work was fully completed, he was already fashioning and trimming another idea into shape. In 1920, for instance, while he was on his American tour, the play « *Windows* » was written and the greater part of another, « *A Family Man* », as well as the little sketch « *Punch and Go* ». Speaking of 1909, a particularly prolific year, Marrot says : « He was « working quickly and variedly — indeed ideas were « coming to him faster than he could work them out. « After the appearance of " *Fraternity* " and " *Strife* ", « he set to work immediately on " *The Eldest Son* ", « which he revised and completed... by May... Before « May was out he had written " *The Little Dream* "... « He then started work on " *The Mob* ", though this « was soon temporarily discontinued. To this period « also belong the paper " *Some Platitudes Concerning « Drama* ", published in the " *Fortnightly Review* " « and the " *Atlantic Monthly* " (In November he found « time to read it before the *Sesame Club*). This was not « bad work for some five months, but there was plenty « yet to come. At the beginning of July he began « " *The Patricians* " (as it was first named) of which the « first two chapters were soon written. Three weeks « in London were succeeded by three more at Ilkley, « which saw the completion of the first two acts of « " *Justice* ". The third act followed during the next « week, at Scarborough... » (13).

(13) MARROT, p. 247. See also (pp. 309-310) the account of Galsworthy's work in the year 1911.

He liked to supervise the rehearsals of his plays and this naturally made heavy calls on his time and energies, calls which became still heavier when his work was produced abroad. As a lecturer also, Galsworthy was in constant demand, and with all this there were the many public causes in which, at various times during his life, he interested himself, and to which, despite all his other activities, he managed to give energetic support. For Galsworthy the reformer was not content merely to beat an ineffectual drum, or to play the easy rôle of the armchair critic ; his untiring efforts towards the abolition of solitary confinement, for example, were made after a careful and personal study of existing prison conditions and after long conversations with the prisoners themselves.

In his critical essay, « Some Platitudes concerning Drama », Galsworthy touched upon the future of the English theatre and his belief in its rebirth. He foresaw the revival being brought about through two differing agencies, two distinct types of drama : one, the « naturalistic » (as he conceived it), and the other a form of poetic prose ; but the functions of the two would be so widely separated, their characters so divergent, that they must remain forever apart, for any intermingling would be disastrous to both. To quote his own words : « The « one will be the broad and clear-cut channel of naturalism, down which will course a drama poignantly shaped, and inspired with high intention, but faithful to the seething and multiple life around us, drama such as some are inclined to term photographic... ». « And the other of these two main channels will, I think, be a twisting and delicious stream, which will bear on its breast new barques of poetry, shaped, it may be, like prose, but a prose incarnating through its fantasy and symbolism all the deeper aspirations, yearning, doubts, and mysterious stirrings of the human spirit... » « And between these two forms there must be no crude unions ; they are too far apart, the cross is too violent » (14).

(14) « Some Platitudes Concerning Drama », see *The Inn of Tranquillity ; studies and essays*, Tauchnitz, pp. 198-200.

These two forms of drama we find exemplified in Galsworthy's own work, although in some cases the two currents, if they do not meet, come very close to each other, as, for instance, in « A Bit o' Love » and « The Pigeon ». Towards the end of his career, too, he made some experiments in new technique, which resulted in the writing of « The Forest », « Escape » and « The Roof ». Save for the latter three, and, may be, « Windows », his output falls into two categories and may be classified, on the one hand, as naturalistic, and, on the other, as poetic, symbolical and imaginative. To the first group belongs all his principal work : « The Silver Box » ; « Strife » ; « The Eldest Son » ; « Justice » ; « The Fugitive » ; « The Mob » ; « The Skin Game » ; « A Family Man » ; « Loyalties » ; « Old English » ; « The Show » ; « Exiled » ; « The First and the Last » ; while to the second belongs « The Little Dream », and in a great measure « A Bit o' Love », « The Pigeon » and, perhaps, « Joy », not to mention the satirical, less important plays. Of the latter, « The Foundations » is a full-length comedy in three acts, but the rest, « Hall-Marked », « The Little Man », « Punch and Go », etc., are much slighter.

This dramatic output of twenty-one long plays and some half-dozen shorter pieces, covered a period of a little over twenty years which ended with the performance of « The Roof » at the Vaudeville Theatre, in 1929.

CHAPTER II

1. THE MELODRAMATIC PLOTS. — 2. PSYCHOLOGY AND REALISM. — 3. SUBJECT AND THEME. — 4. THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE ARTIST.

I

Not only was the melodramatic tradition far from extinct in England when Galsworthy wrote his « Silver Box », but the public, familiar with his previous novels, might find, in some features of his personality, good reasons to expect that he would be unable to steer clear of this tradition. It was easy to recognize in him something of a belated romantic writer. He had a leaning towards the sentimental, which was apparent enough under the artistic discipline that he imposed upon himself in his prose fiction. He was extremely sensitive to some forms of evil, which he felt in his heart more than he analyzed them with his brain. He pleaded the cause of the pathetic victims of society and life, as a passionate advocate who imperfectly concealed the violence of his indignation under a show of impartial realism and systematic restraint in self-expression.

This attitude so characteristic of his novels could hardly, on the other hand, be applied without great effort of adaptation, to dramatic composition. For it needed, with its accumulation of light touches and study of slow changes, both a very wide canvas and subjects extremely extensive, suitable for the presentation of the manifold

aspects of life. Both are, to a great measure, denied to the dramatist, who must, in a very limited time, convey, through the rapid action of the characters, his own emotions or criticism of life in forms suited to the very special conditions of the theatre. He often has to exaggerate the effects and heighten the colours in order to get them over the footlights, and that quickly enough not to impede the gradual increase of the dramatic emotional tension. He has to allow for a perspective which lends itself to cruder methods than work meant to be read and analyzed at leisure, unhampered by limitations of space and time. Thus, when Galsworthy set his hand to drama-writing, he must, in all probability, have felt himself liberated from some of his usual discipline, and also confronted with new problems of composition. And indeed, as his output of plays steadily increased, some critics came to the conclusion that this part of his literary work served him as a sort of outlet, and relief from his practice of self-control, under-expression and minute realism, for which, as a novelist, he has been unanimously praised.

And indeed, looking at his plays, we are not altogether disappointed in our expectations (if we had any) of seeing him yield to the lure of what has come to be associated with the melodrama. For one thing, most of them contain a substantial story with obvious chronological development. We can watch in them, as we can in the most elementary melodrama or farcical comedy, a line of physical events succeeding one another like the links of a chain. Or in some of them (in « The Fugitive » and « The Mob » for instance) the leading figures (Clare and More) hardly ever leave the stage, everything happening round their material presences ; and a great many plots may be considered as studies in imaginary biographies including the connected stories of some very definite characters shown at a crucial period of their existence when they are momentarily brought into contact by the pressure of dramatic events : in short, the representation on the stage of pictures of life, with incidents arranged, concentrated, set out in the full

glare of the foot-lights, productive of interest and curiosity in the adventures of the heroes and heroines.

When Galsworthy called the main body of his output « naturalistic », he did not use this term in the sense attributed to it by the French school of criticism in the late XIXth century. His plays are essentially narrative, and he very seldom replaced in them the « acts » by the « *tableaux* », so forcibly denounced by Francisque Sarcey, Brunetière, and Fagnel, in the name of dramatic movement ; when one appears in the course of a play, it does so as an insertion, a parenthesis as it were, not as an essential composing element ; and these insertions, the prison scene in Act III of « *Justice* », for example, or the trial with which the third act of « *The Silver Box* » begins unexpectedly, are generally so pregnant with emotion and so vigorously carried on by a movement of their own, that they are more like diminutive dramas in themselves than static illustrations added to the matter of the actual play. Never, anyhow, with the exception of « *The Little Dream* » and « *The Roof* », is any of Galsworthy's plays a mere succession of such *tableaux*, i.e. pictorial studies of social milieux ; rarely in his drama, save for a very few exceptions such as are to be found in « *The Foundations* » and « *Windows* », does the external action ever remain at a standstill or merely lag. On the contrary, in « *Escape* » the whole plot is in the shape of a mere sequence of episodes, a story of adventure that shows us an escaped convict meeting with a succession of embarrassing and dangerous situations until, the time for the final curtain arriving, he at last falls back into the hands of his pursuers.

Of course, the strength of the physical link that unites the development of the action may vary considerably from one play to another. While « *The Silver Box* », « *The Skin Game* », « *Strife* », « *Justice* », « *Loyalties* » are of a very substantial and closely spun fabric, with others the story is, we feel, mainly a pretext for some deeper purpose and a means of enhancing our interest in the characters by appealing to the most childish form of our curiosity ; in « *The Foundations* »

the plot is conspicuously feeble, hingeing altogether on the presence, among groups of characters, of some mysterious object, believed by everybody for a long time to be a bomb, and whose real nature, disclosed at the end in discreet whispers, has, we gather, something to do with sanitation ; while in « The Forest » it is divided into two parts, with a very wide breach between them, with several sets of characters separated by long lapses of time and by the expanse stretching between a city office and an African forest. But then, neither « The Foundations », nor « The Forest », nor again the above-mentioned « Roof » belong to the list of what may be called the specifically Galsworthian dramas, but should rather be considered as experimental ventures.

In most plays, whatever their purpose may be, the number of incidents is great ; in many, bewilderingly so. Obviously, Galsworthy let himself be influenced by his technique as a novelist. Now, though the novel may indulge in accumulation, the principle of a play, because of its limitations, is necessarily discrimination and choice. Indeed, the author was conscious of this, since he complained more than once that he felt cramped by the strict exigencies of the stage (1). It is clear, nevertheless, that he did not always bear them in mind ; « The Skin Game » and some parts of « The Eldest Son » are striking examples of this tendency to overcrowding. In « Joy », to quote another instance, there are numerous secondary details which crop up in the dialogue of the first act : the hair-dressing incident, the allotting of sleeping quarters for the guests, with its

(1) See in MARROT (pp. 790-791), the last part of a letter to Mr. Kenneth Andrews, December 20, 1922 : « ...You talk of my « being » never quite comfortable in the theatre ». I am not « conscious of this ; at least not for the reasons you suggest... « If there is an awkwardness you feel about me in stageland, it « must be caused by the fact that I was first (for many years) a « novelist, and came to the theatre conscious that there is a « limitation set to creative freedom by the forms and physical « conditions of the drama. I have never quite lost that « consciousness. I am probably more hampered creatively by « stage conditions than I should have been if I had been first a « dramatist. I cannot quite shake off a sense of cramp in writing « for the theatre. »

suggestion of an equivocal situation somewhere in the background — all these serve a purpose, either symbolical or otherwise, but dramatically speaking overcrowd the canvas. And never, though the plots may include other sources of interest, is the physical element entirely passed over in favour of what Maeterlinck has called the « *Tragique Quotidien* » : « An old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him — submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny — motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who " avenges his honour " » (2). This is quite foreign to Galsworthy's manner ; things happen in his plays, and his characters live vividly, in their relation to external events as well as psychologically, within themselves. There is perhaps no instance of a lover strangling his mistress, nor yet any husband his wife (which this dramatist would seem to consider more likely), but husbands and fathers may nevertheless show their power and exteriorize their feelings in other very concrete gestures ; captains of industry fight on their own battlefield, that of social power ; and there are more ways than one of asserting one's rights and « avenging one's honour ».

Furthermore, these plots are not only firmly constructed and richly furnished with psychological events. Their sensational character is also very marked, and when we examine them we find that the situations are much akin to those which had been favoured by an older school. Indeed, the situations that served that master of the melodramatic novel, Victor Hugo, are here found again beneath very thin disguises : the crime committed with noble intentions, the hunting-down of the ticket-

(2) Quoted on page 37 of « *Playmaking : a manual of craftsmanship* » (Chapman & Hall, 1930 ; first published 1912), by William ARCHER, who adds, however : « *Dramatic* in the eyes of writers of this school, has become a term of reproach, synonymous with « *theatrical*... They do not observe that Maeterlinck, in his own practice, constantly deals with crises and often with violent and « startling ones. »

of-leave man, the convict who cannot escape the stern dictates of his own conscience, the giving oneself up to save a wretch wrongly accused, the sublime lie of Sister Simplice — we easily discover their parallels in Galsworthy's drama.

« The First and the Last » is a complete melodrama in a nutshell ; it contains all the essentials : the betrayed and persecuted heroine, the chivalrous knight errant, the calculating villain. Larry Darrant, a temperamental young man, of good intentions but unstable will, has become involved with Wanda, a Polish girl who has passed through manifold adventures of a devastating nature, including marriage at sixteen with a brute who ill-treated and subsequently deserted her, starvation, and going on the streets. Throughout them all, we learn, she has preserved her sweetness of soul, and when she meets Larry, the one man who treats her humanely, she gives him a whole-hearted devotion which is fully reciprocated. Unfortunately for this idyll, the wife-beater turns up once more. He and Larry meet in Wanda's flat, the bully attacks his wife's lover and in the ensuing struggle Larry strangles his opponent. This is further than he intended to go in self-defence, but nevertheless Larry is now faced with the unpleasant fact that he is a murderer. A body, even of a wife-beater, being a cumbersome object to have about the place, Larry, under cover of night, conveys the corpse away and deposits it in a neighbouring bye-way. All this has occurred before the play begins. The first scene shows us Larry, dazed and horror-stricken, seeking out his elder brother, Keith, to whom he confides his woes. Keith Darrant is the antithesis of his brother — prudent, intelligent, practical. Moreover, he is a successful K.C. in daily expectation of being made a judge. Feeling that Larry's exploit is likely to have a damaging effect upon his own professional and social advancement, Keith lays down a plan of action for his brother, which consists chiefly in his keeping out of the way until the trouble has blown over, since for the present nothing connects him with the crime although the body of the

victim has been discovered. Larry is willing to follow these sage counsels, but matters become more complicated when a wretched tramp, Walen, is accused of the murder and condemned. Still Keith opposes Larry's quixotic impulse to give himself up, promising that by hook or crook he will get Walen reprieved. But Larry realizes that he is a misfit in this world of shams and conventions ; there is no happiness possible now for him and Wanda and as they cannot endure to be separated they must take leave of life together. A white powder does the rest, and Keith comes back to find the lovers dead in each other's arms, a written confession of Larry's guilt beside them. If this document is made public, farewell to Keith Darrant's brilliant career : if it is suppressed, Walen will be hanged. There is but a moment's hesitation. Then, Keith burns the paper, extinguishes the light, closes the door and goes away — a « verray parfit gentil » villain.

Quite a number of Galsworthy's plots have to do with crime in one form or another — theft, forgery, manslaughter — and the attendant police enquiries. Two of them take us within the walls of a convict prison. Several could be worked up into admirable detective novels, and of these the best example is probably « Loyalties », which is, apart from any other qualities it may possess, an excellent specimen of a « crook » drama. At the Winsor's house party a large sum in banknotes is missed from the bedroom of one of the guests, the young Jew, Ferdinand De Levis. Given the circumstances, it is a clear case of theft ; the police are called in, but do not find any clue that might help them to discover the identity of the culprit. De Levis, however, has good reasons to suspect a fellow guest, Ronald Daney, a reckless, dare-devil officer, notoriously hard-up. Amidst general indignation, De Levis, already galled by the knowledge that the house party consider him as something of an outsider, voices his suspicions ; for him, facts are facts and he has no bias in favour of any member of a clan to which, to say the least, he does not belong by right of birth. Daney and his friends

repudiate the accusation and endeavour to ignore the whole affair and Mr. De Levis. The latter is willing to hold his tongue if his money is returned, but as he only succeeds in getting himself dropped by the society into which he has been seeking to penetrate, he takes his revenge by publicly attacking Dancy's character. Under pressure from his wife and others, Dancy reluctantly starts an action for slander. But now a disquieting detail comes to light. It had been proved that the thief must have entered De Levis's bedroom from the balcony, at a moment when rain was falling ; during the investigations that followed the discovery of the loss, one of the guests happened to lay his hand on Dancy's arm and found his coat sleeve wet. Still, this does not suffice to prove him guilty, and his friends' loyalty to him is unshaken. However, little by little some rather ugly transactions discreditable to Dancy are revealed, and in the end the evidence against him is overwhelming. His lawyers throw up his case and Dancy shoots himself.

In « The Forest » we have another instance of robbery, but on a far larger scale — the robbery known to its perpetrators by the more agreeable name of high finance. Here, unfortunately, no appeal to law is possible, nor do the persons in the story seek refuge in suicide ; on the contrary, they score all along the line.

The themes of seduction and of « fallen » women, worn threadbare, both of them, in the old-time melodrama, also have their places in the dramas of Galsworthy. Freda, in « The Eldest Son », and Faith in « Windows », are young girls who have been tempted from virtue's path. Ruth, in « Justice » becomes her employer's mistress to save her children from starvation ; Wanda, in « The First and the Last », The Girl in « Defeat », are both women who have taken to the streets as a last resource ; Clare, in « The Fugitive », only avoids the same fate by suicide.

Then, there are the stories of persecution, of those helpless victims of circumstances, against whom the fearful odds pile up irresistibly until, battered and discouraged, they take refuge in flight or succumb under

the blows of fortune. The subject is a favourite one with this author and many of his leading characters are chosen among the defeated in the battle of life. Of their company is the pathetic Mrs. Jones, in « The Silver Box », Strangways, in « A Bit o' Love », Cloc, in « The Skin Game », and Clare, in « The Fugitive ».

Clare Dedmond, in the latter play, is first shown to us, chafing under a marriage yoke that galls her ; she and her husband are quite unsuited to each other spiritually, but George Dedmond has too much respect for his proprietary rights to allow his wife a separation. Clare has formed a friendship with a literary man of bohemian tastes and revolutionary ideals, Malise, whose iconoclastic doctrines and contempt for the conventional set in which the Dedmonds move, spur Clare on to open rebellion. She leaves home and having no one else to go to, seeks out Malise for counsel. Malise loves her, but Clare is not at first prepared for more than the friendship already existing between them. George has tracked his wife to Malise's rooms and naturally supposes the worst ; there is a violent scene between the two men and George threatens divorce if his wife does not return home at once. This Clare refuses to do, and Act II closes with her going off to try and earn her own living. It is a hopeless venture for a woman brought up in luxury. Three months later, she comes back to Malise, beaten in the wage-earning fight, and with changed sentiments towards her friend. She takes up her abode with Malise, while preparations for George's divorce are going on, but a very few months see their first happiness impaired ; Malise is a poor man and the scandal has not improved his prospects in the literary world. Clare realizes that she is wrecking his life and that his affection for her is feeling the strain of material reverses. In a gesture of supreme self-sacrifice she goes away, penniless, friendless, into a world where she no longer has any place. The last act shows her confronted with the one possibility always remaining to a young and beautiful woman ; but Clare Dedmond is too fine-grained to follow the oldest profession in the world ; death will release her from a

life which has become unbearable, and she poisons herself.

It may happen, of course, that such victims of persecution put up a more stubborn opposition than poor Mrs. Jones is able to do. Thus, Stephen More, in « The Mob », fights on to the bitter end ; Matt Dennant, in « Escape », does not take his punishment lying down and gives his pursuers a run for their money. Sir Charles Denbury, in « Exiled », may rightly affirm that his head « is bloody but unbowd ». But be the resistance offered feeble or vigorous, the result in the end is always the same and disaster overwhelms the central figure, leaving us with an almost intolerable sense of compassion.

The « happy ending » is practically unknown in any of Galsworthy's plays. If we except « Joy » and « The Foundations », there is no case where the *dénouement* of the situation does not involve ruin and desolation for the main character or characters. The problems which confront, Ferrand and little Mrs Megan, in « The Pigeon », may be said not to have been solved at all when the last curtain drops, for the reason that, as the author makes clear, there is no remedy for their particular ills ; and as there is no situation proper in this play, so, naturally, there is no *dénouement* — we merely accompany the characters a little way along their thorny path and then leave them to wander further on what we know will be the same road to the end. But in every one of the other dramas the *dénouement* is definitely of a tragic nature, and very often highly sensational. The last picture which we have of Mrs. Jones in « The Silver Box » is one of mute submission to defeat : this is entirely in keeping with her personality as revealed to us throughout, but it is none the less poignant and indeed one of the most moving conclusions which the playwright has provided. Others are of a far more violent character. Frequent are the instances of death being shown as the means of escape from a situation otherwise without issue. In « The Mob », Stephen More dies by the hands of his

enemies. More commonly it is death self-inflicted that liberates the sufferer. As we have seen, Ronald Dancy, in « Loyalties », shoots himself when his guilt can no longer be concealed ; Clare Dedmond, in « The Fugitive », takes poison rather than face prostitution ; the unhappy Falder, in « Justice », dies as a result of his own rash act, whether deliberately or by accident we shall never know. Cloe's attempted suicide in « The Skin Game » is pure melodrama, indeed the whole figure of Cloe is melodramatic. Saddled with a regrettable past, she has contrived to marry into a wealthy self-made family. She sincerely loves, and is beloved by, her husband, Charles Hornblower, to whom certain details of her earlier existence are unknown. A conflict arises between the county, on one side, and the Hornblowers on the other, in the course of which the stigma attaching to Cloe's reputation is exploited to the full as a means of ridding the neighbourhood of the unwelcome *nouveaux riches*. Cloe, in a desperate bid for secrecy, even offers her person as a bribe to one of her trackers, but in vain. The truth comes out and, unable to face her husband, she tries to destroy herself. — The final episode of « The Roof » is distinctly of the « blood and thunder » style of drama. It is, no doubt, incorrect to refer to this incident as a *dénouement*, for in « The Roof » there is no situation to unravel ; but it is the culminating scene of the play and completes the cycle of events.

II

All these undeniable features notwithstanding, nobody has ever considered Galsworthy the playwright as an author of mere outright melodrama. As a matter of fact, many dramatists use strong plots and have a partiality for violent *dénouements* ; there is nothing in these contrary to the law of the theatre ; far from it, since the very necessities and limitations of the stage

rather impose it upon the playwright to show his characters in a critical moment of their fictitious existence and amidst situations susceptible of rousing an audience to a state of high emotional tension. The plays with no connected story are a small minority, and visible action being the right medium for dramatic art, it is only natural that the chosen story should be represented on the stage by striking physical events. What we have come to mean when we speak disparagingly of a « melodramatic piece », and of « theatrical situations » is that more respect seems to be shown in them for some hackneyed traditions of the stage than for reality and life ; that their creators are content with inartistic, artificial, often worn out devices ; and, finally, that extravagant wording, violent gesticulation and crude appeal to very elementary emotions are the sum-total of the means and purposes of such work. It was of these Leigh Hunt was writing, as early as 1818, when he deplored « the tendency to mistake vehemence for « strength, the impatience of lowness for the attainment « of height, and excessive tragic effect physically over- « powering for real effect at once carrying away and « sustaining » (3).

On the other hand, as G. H. Lewes pointed out (4), « Sophocles and Shakespeare are as sensational as « Fitzball or Dumas ; but the situations, which in the « latter are the aim and objects of the piece, to which « all the rest is subordinated, in the former are mere « starting points, the nodes of dramatic action ». We may add that a given situation, even most strong, is liable to several sorts of treatments ; the dramatist may emphasize the improbable and spectacular, or, on the contrary, use his art to make everything acceptable to the critics' demand for humanity and truth, and to the fastidiousness of refined, educated taste.

It does not take long for us to see that Galsworthy abstains from making the most of the sensational quality

(3) In « *The Examiner* », April 1818.

(4) « *On Actors and Acting* » (1875), by G. H. LEWES, p. 15.

so apparent at first in the situations he imagines for his plays. In his stories of crime and detection he does not rely on simple curiosity as a source of interest ; in his plays dealing with persecution and disaster, he does not lay stress on the mere physical aspects of misfortune ; his villains and knights errant do not exchange mighty blows with weapons of steel or pace the stage with pistols in their hands and full arsenals in their pockets. We have mentioned « Loyalties » as an excellent specimen of what we now call the « crook » drama ; but although our interest is fully kept alive throughout the play, this is not because we are for long in doubt as to the identity of the thief ; there are no cheap tricks to put us on a false scent, followed by a sudden revelation from an unexpected quarter. In « The Show », the suicide of Colin Morecombe, out of which arise all the complications which make up the story, occurs before the visible action begins. In « The Skin Game », we do not see Cloe fling herself into the gravel pit, nor does she preface her gesture by highflown declamation.

If then the playwright with whom we are here concerned did not mean to follow the traditions of the melodramatic school, if we derive from his plays, for all their strong situations and for all their sensational quality, the impression that they are something different from, and more satisfying than, crude melodramas, it means that we are to look below the surface of physical action for the origin of the unmistakable flavour of the Galsworthian drama. And this we discover in the abstract purport, as well as in the artistic treatment of those melodramatic, sometimes time-worn, plots.

Underneath each incident of each individual story, there usually lie several depths of significance.

To begin with, there is no doubt that, in Galsworthy, physical action is invariably the thought-out result of internal action ; striking situations are chosen as being most provocative of quick and violent psychological movements ; and spectacular gestures are not imposed on the characters from without ; they are accounted for by profound psychological disturbances and supply

tangible signs for mental states of corresponding dramatic intensity. As a matter of fact, we might even say that in many plays, the feelings run so high that their material manifestations are in several instances remarkably tame and subdued. But of this we shall say more in later chapters. Howbeit, in his plays as in his novels, Galsworthy displays his qualities of a psychologist, and the emotion of his audience usually takes the form of sympathy with the inner sentiments of the fictitious characters, rightly or wrongly recognized as true to life and to humanity. The oppositions and shocks between characters are those of feelings and wills, and conflicts arise within individual consciences as well as between antagonistic personalities. These plots therefore, with their connected successions of physical events, are no mere chains of material actions. They are studies of motives and consequences on the human person, of an initial striking incident, with analyses of human reactions to its stimulus ; or the story of a long resistance or momentous choice, of a mental struggle with scales weighted to a nicety, involving a long tale of hesitation and wavering previous to some final decision which is to provoke catastrophe. In « The Silver Box » we follow step by step the weakening of Jack's better feelings and of Barthwick's loyalty to his ideals under the pressure of the situation, until they deliberately withhold the revelation that would save the wretched Jones and his family from disaster ; in « The Show » what matters is not the suicide before the raising of the curtain or the disclosure of its motives, but the wrecking of several lives by the curiosity of a public athirst for scandal. In « The Eldest Son », the stand taken by the Cheshire family and the rapid evolution of Freda's feelings are far more important than the love story ; in « Justice », the crime and arrest are occasions for studying the state of mind of a not too well-balanced man under the strain of solitary confinement ; and the fact that the woman he loves is reduced to prostitution moves us less by itself than because we feel it is yet another blow for the already overwhelmed ticket-of-leave man whose sole

consolation has been the thought of rejoining her. And so it is for most of the plays.

By thus according his attention to the psychological truths that underlie even unusual human actions, Galsworthy, here as in his novels, deserves the name of a realist ; he made no unjustified claim when in his critical correspondence, he applied to the major portion of his dramatic work the term « naturalistic ». However strong the situation he may have started from, he did not distort the characters in order to adapt them to it ; but his method was, as he has informed us (5), to set them in their respective places and then let them lead their own lives within the framework of the plot, all

(5) « With plays, J. G. argued, it is only a question of the « "fourth wall" ; if you have a subject of sufficient dramatic interest, and visualize it powerfully enough, perfectly naturally, « as if you were the fourth wall, you will be able to present it to « others in the form of a good play. I worked for ten years at « writing, and in the course of that time I had had a lot of « experience in writing dialogue ; then I wrote " The Silver Box " « and it was immediately taken by Shaw and Barker, controlling « the Vedrenne and Barker affair, showing that it was not a bad « play. Of course there are limitations in the theatre (as to size « and time), but these ought to impose their own technique « automatically to anyone with commonsense... » (MANNOR, pp. 565-566). « My own method was the outcome of the trained « habit (which I was already employing in my novels) of « naturalistic dialogue guided, informed and selected by a « controlling idea, together with an intense visualization of types « and scenes. I just wrote down the result of these two, having « always in my mind's eye, not the stage, but the room or space « where in real life the action would pass » (Reply to a German student, August-September, 1913, MANNOR, p. 714). See also « Letter to an American Correspondent », July 19, 1927 (MANNOR, 602-3).

Thus, in his own words, Galsworthy « just visualized the « scenes in a play, his people talking, the way they sit, their « gestures, their faces, as much in his novels as in his plays » (MANNOR, p. 565). This was part of his lifelong claim that he was concerned with portraying life, much more than with writing « theatre » ; hence the reproach addressed to him by many critics, after the production of « The Silver Box » : « This is not drama : it is photography » ; for which a laudatory notice in *The Academy* praised John Galsworthy : « He tackled the problem « of putting his characters on to the stage simply and straight- « forwardly, without preoccupation » (MANNOR, p. 201). E. F. Spence gave a good definition of the method, in his criticism of « Joy » : « You conceive half-a-dozen characters as truly and « vividly as you can ; then you bring them into contact with one « another and see what sort of events come about from their « clashing, and these events, properly ordered, form your plot » (MANNOR, p. 209).

the time reserving possibilities for their natural development and gradual revelation. Moreover, the persons who are to appear in traditional melodramatic parts are not made to measure for them according to old canons. We are confronted with no superhuman heroes and thorough-paced villains, wicked to the core and steeped in cynicism ; but with fairly indecisive figures such as we meet in life every day, yielding to good impulses and to bad ones, or with people of weak will and narrow vision who become entrapped and inextricably involved, or with culprits sinned against as much as sinners themselves. In « Justice », Falder in no wise impresses us as a hardened criminal ; and his theft both admits of extenuating circumstances and is aggravated by the forger's readiness to let somebody else's reputation suffer for his act. In « Loyalties », the thief ends by doing what he considers the only decent thing left for him, liberating his wife from association with a dishonoured man.

For all these, Galsworthy hardly seems to have looked beyond the occurrences of daily existence. His subjects were always sought for in the world which lay closest to him, for he held that one can paint well and effectively only that which one knows well, and that an artist gains by deliberately restricting his field. And this world being that of the respectable upper middle-class, of the gentry, of clerks, lawyers and business men, we do not for one moment doubt that we are still walking with him in the most familiar ways of existence ; this causes us to accept all the more easily whatever may be exceptional in the cases set before our eyes, nothing in them striking us as being too obtrusively out of the common. We allow ourselves to be moved and convinced, without resisting unconsciously from the outset, as we should infallibly do with plays depicting extreme situations, violent actions, and conventionally exaggerated characters in unreal, extraordinary surroundings. Thus Galsworthy rose far above the level of the melodrama, not only by deliberately focussing his attention on the causes and consequences of physical action, and by

applying to his dramatic work his powers as a psychologist, but by the very simple device of looking for the genuinely dramatic among the possibilities and happenings of the everyday round.

III

Another valuable quality of these plays is their seriousness. In each, the characters involved in a close, continuous succession of striking situations, incidents, actions and reactions, are to a certain extent also « cases » linked together in a network of human and social affinities and antagonisms ; many are representatives of groups ; the circumstances to which we see them react bring out their mental and physical relationships to the society in which they live, or with other individuals considered, too, as members of this society. Here, therefore, are no mere romantic dramas, but significant studies embracing questions of very wide import or of topical interest.

Thus a distinction is generally to be made in Galsworthy's work between plot and subject. The plot is the story of the characters as creatures of flesh and blood, each with his individual existence and private concerns and emotions. The subject is the problem of conflicting forces at work in an organized community of men grouped within it into many and often opposing sets. So the characters are invariably shown against their social background, the picture of a *milieu* being then suggested to our minds or put before our eyes. However strongly the play is centred round one or a few important heroes we feel that a wider issue is at stake. Often it is concerned with the treatment meted out by the social body, as a whole, to one of its members, with the effects upon him of an ethical principle or of an institution : thus, for instance, the problem of law and retribution is raised in « Justice », that of private charity and reform in « The Pigeon », that of marriage in « The Fugitive », and that of the family in « A

Family Man ». Elsewhere, the characters appear as parts or representatives of a nation (« The Mob »), of a class (« The Skin Game », « The Foundations », « The Silver Box »), of a caste (« Loyalties », « The Eldest Son »), or even of different generations (« Joy »). united by communities of interests, of traditions, of feelings and of ideals. And although each play has its particular subject, not one but several of these questions are touched upon as the scenes follow one another.

Underlying the social subject, we shall find in Galsworthy's dramas, a wider-reaching and more abstract theme. It is worth insisting on the existence of a still deeper meaning in most plays than their social import and topical interest, since confusions on this point have often been responsible for grave misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the author's work, together with quite unjustified praise or disparagement. At an early stage, all proofs and denegations notwithstanding, the General Public made up its mind that « Strife » was concerned only with the conflict of capital and labour, and having once taken up this position it continued to direct its judgment accordingly. After the production of the play, born in its author's mind from the spectacle of sterile clashes of will, Galsworthy was congratulated successively by a capitalist and a labour man, both of whom felt that he had given the opposite side « something to get on with ». (6) A similar instance of failure to grasp the deeper intention of the dramatist was to occur later with « Escape », when the public did not realize that here was again a variation upon Jean Valjean's experience, that no man can ever escape from himself. A lady even went so far as to denounce « Escape » on the grounds that it was propaganda for murderers, which she resented all the more as her own grandfather in Ireland had been the victim of an assassination (7). Nor was this attitude towards Galsworthy's drama adopted only by the uneducated, or those

(6) See MARROT, p. 638. Also p. 559 : some papers blamed, others praised the impartiality of the author of « Strife ».

(7) See MARROT, p. 576.

whom the irreverent modern would designate as « bat-eyed ». Joseph Conrad obviously believed that his friend was inspired by immediate problems, since he advised him to complete the trilogy begun with « The Silver Box » and « Strife » by now treating the third term, the theme of party politics, which also contains elements of drama. May it not be that Galsworthy to some extent complied with this suggestion when he wrote « The Mob » ?

Of course the confusion can be in a measure satisfactorily accounted for. It may indeed happen that, in some particular drama, accidentally and exceptionally, theme and subject are one and the same thing ; thus, in « The Show », where the theme is, to quote the author's own words, « our modern love of sensation », and the subject, the havoc worked by the Press in family life for the sake of pandering to this morbid curiosity of the public, the two are so intermingled that separation and identification become matters of extreme difficulty. Also it must be admitted that the dramatist himself is not always very clearly conscious of the real purport of certain plays. Concerning the theme of « The Fugitive », he gives to Sir A. Quiller Couch an interpretation at variance with that offered to Gerald Du Maurier (8). In his intentions, he is not invariably free from all topical concern. We find him asking Leon M. Lion, of Wyndham's Theatre, not to delay the performance of « Exiled » (9) — (« The play », he argued, « is essentially one which ought to « be played as soon as possible. It is not a play that « would be likely to revive well out of its time »). Again, a source of this confusion may be found in dramas where the theme does not stand out in full light, as

(8) To Gerald Du Maurier, on June 5, 1913 (see MARROT, p. 372, and Note 14 of this chapter) he replies that the play « is the tragedy of ladyhood ». To Sir Quiller Couch (October 21, 1913), he protests against a misinterpretation of « The Dark Flower », and writes « ...and I will assume with you that the « book is a treatise on the theme " no duty survives when love « does not " — (a definition, indeed, which perhaps might apply « to my play *The Fugitive*)... »

(9) February 2, 1929, MARROT, p. 615.

occurs in plays of fancy, like « The Little Dream » or « The Pigeon ». Of the first, Galsworthy himself confessed that he wrote it for his personal satisfaction, as an expression of his own spiritual need ; while « The Pigeon » he refers to as a nightmare about the tendency of present day society to institutionalize everything pertaining to human existence. Sometimes even, and this is a sin against artistic balance, where the subject is of immediate concern to him, Galsworthy allows his strong feelings to run away with him, the result of it being that the subject obscures the wider idea and the philosophical emotion lying behind it. There is little doubt that if « The Fugitive » and « A Bit o' Love » were misinterpreted as further variations on the theme of individual oppression in marriage, and if « Justice » was regarded as a plea against solitary confinement, circumstances in the author's own life and his personal tendency to claustrophobia (10) are partly to be blamed for it.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that, as a rule, the social subject is one thing and the theme another. Besides the proofs supplied by internal evidence, a mere glance at the list of Galsworthy's plays shows that it is to the theme, rather than to the social subject, that the titles have reference. This is not an invariable rule ; some titles refer to the main incident of the plot (ex : « The Silver Box »), or even to the subject-character (ex : « A Family Man ») ; but a great many are linked with the idea or emotion that lies at the root of them. Galsworthy was very fastidious in the choice of his titles

(10) See Ed. Guyot, « *John Galsworthy, le Romancier* », p. 21 : « Et cependant il y a, dans maintes de ses pages, un je ne sais « quoi de réticent, une lourdeur sensuelle qui fait songer à des « secrets trop longtemps gardés. » About Ada Galsworthy's first marriage and her irregular union with her cousin John, previous to marrying him, see Marrot, pp. 101 and following. Galsworthy took a more active part in the crusade for prison reform than in any other social campaign : was it not because he personally felt most acutely the horrors of solitary confinement on which his imagination dwelt ? (On this crusade, see MARROT, pp. 250 and following). Moreover, his biographer writes in his account of the last years : « Always inclined to a sense of claustrophobia, the « nursing home preyed on his mind » (MARROT, p. 648).

and some of them were only decided upon after much careful weighing and changing. Typical of the instances where the title bears upon the theme rather than upon the subject are : « Justice », « A Bit o' Love » (originally « The Full Moon »), « The Mob » (originally « The Patriot »), « Loyalties », « Escape » (in this latter the title is happily connected with both plot and theme) ; even « The Fugitive » ; and there are several others. Moreover, as will be seen in a closer study of the author's methods, the theme is generally to be found explicitly stated in one of the last cues, immediately preceding the ultimate fall of the curtain. The whole idea dominating « The Skin Game », for instance, is summed up in Hillerist's « What's gentility worth if it can't stand fire ? », and in the same way, Margaret's cry : « Keeps faith ! We've all done that. It's not enough », gives us the very essence of the theme of « Loyalties » (11).

Galsworthy himself never missed an opportunity of pointing out the distinction he personally made between theme and subject. An extremely significant and explicit statement on the point is given in an answer to an enquiry by an unrecorded correspondent, in which the author sets out his method forcibly and unmistakably (12) : « Each of the plays », he explains, « " The Silver Box ", " Strife ", " Justice " and " The Pigeon ", of course incarnate a main idea. " The Silver Box " that " one law for the rich, another for the poor " is true, but not because society wills it so, « rather, in spite of society's good intentions, through

(11) Although « Loyalties » was praised by many, including Sir James Barrie, and in the dramatic notices of most papers after its first performance, as a good crook-drama stocked with excellent psychology and lively dialogue, yet the fact remains that the play develops the general moral and human theme (dear to its author's heart), that the double foundation of social and individual life ought to be « Kindness in another's trouble, — Courage in your own ». In « Loyalties », everybody has kept faith with a person, a clan, a tradition, a restricted ideal, a narrow conception of honour. This was not enough. Most of them lacked unlimited human understanding and sympathy, a creed of universal kindness and tolerance, far wider than any artificial group.

(12) MARROT, p. 330.

« the mere mechanical wide-branching power of money.
 « " Strife ", that the sword perishes by the sword — the
 « extravagantly strong-willed type meeting the extra-
 « vagantly strong-willed type exhaust themselves and
 « are snowed under by the sheer weight of mediocrity.
 « Please note that in " Strife " the fatal thing is strong
 « will minus self-control and balance, in other words
 « it's an illustration of the predestined idea of....
 « violence, rather than the notion of the old Greeks.
 « " Justice ", that Justice is a blind Goddess in the hands
 « of men — quite unable to fit punishment to crime —
 « a disproportionate creature — blundering along in
 « obedience to the herd instinct to stamp out and
 « protect (itself) from the weak and diseased. " The
 « Pigeon ", that we are all human beings and not
 « physiological specimens, and all reform uninspired by
 « sympathy and understanding is dead wood in our
 « tree... ». In a letter to W. L. George (circa. 1910), he
 had already complained (13) : « Honestly, though the
 « public bangs the drum of " Justice " in connection
 « with Prison Reform, they so jolly well miss the main
 « line of the play that one is more than ever discouraged
 « from taking subjects which can be whittled down to
 « one small issue by the practical — to the neglect of
 « the fundamental criticism of human life. " Justice "
 « tried to paint a picture of how the herd (in crude
 « self-preservation) goes to death its weak members —
 « with the moral of how jolly consistent that is with
 « a religion that worships " Gentle Jesus ". The
 « public — bless them — take it for a tract on solitary
 « confinement (which incidentally it was — but only
 « incidentally). » Such testimonies are numerous. Thus,
 writing to Gerald Du Maurier who has suggested « The
 Fugitive » might be the tragedy of a « fey » woman, he
 answers (14) : « No, the play is the tragedy of " lady-

(13) MARROT, p. 266.

(14) On June 5, 1913 (MARROT, p. 373). Three or four months later, he, however, gave Sir A. Quiller Couch a different interpretation of the same play (MARROT, pp. 381-382). See above, on this question, Note 8, Chapter II.

« hood » ; of women bred and brought up to be all right
 « if things go reasonably well, but neither hardy nor
 « coarsefibred enough for the cross winds of life. Of
 « women too fine to sink really low, and not fine enough
 « to make good in spite of everything..... with the pluck
 « to take any fence in life but not the pluck to drag and
 « slog through ploughed field after ploughed field of
 « dreariness..... » ; and to Miss H. E. F. Horniman (15),
 he writes about « The Mob » : « I'm anxious that the
 « Public should not ride off on the idea that its main
 « motif is a plea for little countries. Its main motif is
 « the duty of a man to stick to his guns in the face of
 « popular disapproval so long as his convictions tell him
 « he is right..... It never depends on the circumstances
 « whether or no a man should abandon his principles
 « when they shine to him like stars, does it ? »

And thus, generally speaking, in each drama is to be found what may be called a major idea, deeply felt and at the same time far-reaching and fundamental enough to be absolutely non-topical and beyond all considerations of time and space. The subject, on the other hand, imposes itself upon the author's perception from without.

IV

Lastly, for all the significance the underlying presence of a theme and of a subject imparts to these dramas, never is their literary quality deliberately sacrificed to any didactic purpose. Throughout, Galsworthy's attitude was the attitude he thus defined in a letter of August 4, 1906, to R. H. Mottram (16) : « The artist takes life as
 « he finds it, observes, connotes and stores with all his
 « feelers, then out of his store constructs (creates
 « according to his temperament) with the *primary*
 « object of stirring the emotional nerves of his audience,
 « and thereby directly, *actively giving pleasure* » ;

(15) March 16, 1914 (MARROT, p. 390).

(16) MARROT, pp. 193-194.

adding besides : « ...Obviously very few men are purely « artists or purely moralists, perhaps none. But all « men are rather more one than the other. » Writing to an unrecorded correspondent, December 11, 1912 (17), Galsworthy says : « I have not any conscious purpose « except to express myself, my feelings, my tempera- « ment, my vision of what life is » ; and again, to another unrecorded correspondent, October 10, 1912 (18) : « ...In regard to my plays : It may perhaps be well to « bear in mind that I am not a reformer — only a « painter of pictures, a maker of things — as sincerely « as I know how — imagined out of what I have seen « and felt. The sociological character of my plays « arises from the fact that I do not divorce creation from « life ; that, living and moving, feeling and seeing « amongst real life, I find myself moved now and then « — not deliberately and consciously — to present to « myself the types, and ideas, and juxtapositions of life « that impinge on my consciousness, and clarify it all « out in the form of a picture. »

Nor is Galsworthy's declared attitude contradicted by internal evidence found in his dramas. Inspired at bottom by broader considerations than the desire to

(17) MARNOT, p. 708. The letter runs on : « ...If I have a philo- « sophical or religious motto, it is contained in Adam Lindsay « Gordon's words (quoted in *The Country House*) :

Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand as stone ;
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own. »

(18) MARNOT, pp. 529-530. At the same time, it must be repeated that Galsworthy was socially-minded ; although he held that no utilitarian purposes were allowed to overlap in his art, he did not believe in the artist's living in an ivory tower and thus missing a number of human experiences, emotions and concerns (See MARNOT, pp. 215-218). His biographer draws up the list of the causes to which he gave his active support. They are : Abolition of Censorship of Plays — Sweated Industries ; Minimum Wage — Labour Unrest ; Labour Exchanges — Woman's Suffrage — Pensions in Mines — Divorce Law Reform — Prison Reform (Closed Cell Confinement) — Aeroplanes in War — Docking of Horses' Tails — For Love of Beasts — Slaughterhouse Reform — Plumage Bill — Caging of Wild Birds — Worn-out Horse Traffic — Performing Animals — Vivisection of Dogs — Dental Experiments on Dogs — Pigeon Shooting — Slum Clearance — Zoos — Children on the Stage — The Three Year Average Income Tax — etc.

reform some particular institution of the time, these are not plays of social propaganda, proposing to point out to us, and to win us over to, a definite line of conduct. Their purpose, if not wholly, yet in the main, is rather to bring the reader or the spectator in contact with moving aspects of spiritual life, the realization of which is thus forced upon him through the medium of his sensibilities. The unity of the themes embodied in the various plays is rooted in a philosophy of life, not in a definite system of ethics ; and their author might therefore deserve the name of a philosopher far more than that of a moralist in the narrow sense of the term. Nor does he strive, notwithstanding that his works generally rest on vast interrogations, to offer definite answers to specific questions. His non-propheying, non-judging attitude, his abstention from taking sides violently for or against a defined rule of life may well have appeared disquieting to many. The very breadth of his themes and the very uncertainty of his conclusions clear his plays of all suspicion of being means to serve a didactic end. Given this, there was little danger that any creed, however sincere, should with Galsworthy stand in the way of his main purpose which, strangely enough, was, when he wrote a drama, first and foremost to write a drama.

Galsworthy, then, could and did approach play-writing, as he approached novel-writing, with an altogether artistic outlook. An artist by reason of the light in which he considered his literary function, he had, besides, the highest idea of his art, dedicating himself to its pursuit with whole-hearted honesty. Unlike some previous dramatists, he never wrote to order, or showed any consideration for the very special interest of the actor-manager, or flattered the public's lowest taste with the hope of gathering bigger audiences. Accountable as he was only to himself, every play of his was (as he claimed in dignified, unassuming statements, (19), accord-

(19) Galsworthy's endless patience in revising and correcting his work is proof enough of his devotion to art and « worship of Perfection for Perfection's sake » (Letter to an unknown cor-

ing to his own judgment, the best that he felt it in his power to turn out. He directed his whole attention towards the aesthetic quality of his work and the application of a clever technique whose combined features give his dramatic output the unmistakable ring which we have come to consider as being distinctly his own and significant of his literary personality.

respondent. December 11, 1912, MARROT, p. 708). He always refused to write on order for actor-managers (see Letter to Sir George Alexander, April 14, 1913, MARROT, p. 711), and in a letter to Mr. Kenneth Andrews, of the *American Bookman* (December 30, 1922, MARROT, p. 790) he vigorously and eloquently denied that he ever considered the destination of anything he wrote until after it was written. « This is in no sense a proof of virtue : it is due to my not being dependent on my pen for bread and butter », he added modestly ; then, movingly : « All my work, however « indifferent, has been the best, according to my own taste and « judgment, that I could do at the time ».

CHAPTER III

1. THE DRAMATIC VALUE OF THE SUBJECTS AND THEMES. —
2. PLOTS, SITUATIONS, DÉNOUEMENTS. — 3. CHARACTERS.

I

For all his claims to the title of artist, setting the pursuit of his literary task above every other consideration, Galsworthy, however, was no pure aesthete ; no dispassionate setter of problems and of fascinating riddles. He had not in him the makings of the cynic or of the amoralist that go far towards ensuring impartiality to the observer of human beings and human affairs. And surely he did himself more than justice... or less than justice, when he wrote to his scandalized and aggrieved sister Lily, in 1905, after her reading « The Man of Property » : « You have not the vein of realism, « cynicism, satiricism, impersonalism... I am not an « optimist nor a pessimist..... I feel more like a sort of « chemist, more cold, more dissective..... » (1).

That the questions affecting Life and Man are questions so great that they needs must, in many cases, remain unanswered, does not mean that we do not, most of us, feel acutely about them, think about them, show preferences, cherish convictions, find around us subjects for hope, despair, indignation. Even though Galsworthy,

(1) MARROT, pp. 181-185. See also Letters to R. H. Mottram, August 4 and November 5, 1906 (MARROT, pp. 192-195), and note 18 of preceding chapter.

sternly holding himself in hand, does not allow his sympathies and antipathies to run away with him, he does not succeed in suppressing them for the sake of his art. His work is full of what M. Edouard Guyot happily called « *sous-entendus moraux* » ; and we might add, also, of « *sous-entendus sociaux* ». Conrad was not hitting wide of the mark altogether when, in 1908, about « Fraternity », he wrote to him : « For that « is what you are : a humanitarian moralist..... Your art « will always be trying to assert itself against the « impulses of your moral feelings. This may lead to a « certain uncertainty of intention..... » (2). Max Beer-bohm was responsible, in 1909, for a pencil sketch representing Mr John Galsworthy scrutinizing Life, that is, focussing an interested eyeglass on a hideous monster, fat and lewd, half satyr and half pig with a suggestion of the self-satisfied well-to-do. The legend to the drawing was « On Mr. Galsworthy envisaging life, — and giving it — for he is nothing if not judicial — credit for the very best intentions ». These words and the accompanying sketch in which Life's appearance is far from prepossessing for all its best intentions, cleverly summarize the themes that inspired Galsworthy in his dramas and are indeed developed in his novels as well as in his plays. And his social philosophy was « merely « a belief that if we all understood and tolerated each « other a little more than we do, the world would be a « happier place to live in » (3). His lesson was one of

(2) May 30, 1908 (Marrot, pp. 223-224).

(3) Quoting from his own pamphlet previously written by himself on Galsworthy's plays, Marrot says on this subject (*Life and Letters of John Galsworthy*, pp. 245-246) : « In the pamphlet, « however, we get a still more definite statement, partly in his « (Galsworthy's) own words..... His plays are an effort to widen « people's understanding of life generally, to awaken their « imagination, and through that, perhaps, their hearts. But he « would not himself admit that they are consciously even that « when he is writing them... » In March 1910, a correspondent asked him what were *his motives in writing* : Does he just want to set out problems, in the hope somebody will solve them ? Or is he without hope, having only « a half-humorous acquiescence « in the facts of life..... saved from suicide by a sense of humour « and proportion ? » Galsworthy's answer to this was : « The « object is, I fear, only that of expressing my philosophy, and

sympathy, his attitude before Life and Mankind « not a half-humorous acquiescence », a well-bred pessimism « saved from suicide by a sense of humour and proportion », but a feeling of intense pity for the littleness of man as compared with the enormousness of the forces (natural and of his own making) under which he very frequently finds himself stifled and wellnigh crushed, together with the conviction that « *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* » (4).

After all, then, Galsworthy *was* inspired, in his dramatic as well as in his other literary work, by a positive although extremely broad creed, moral and social. He laid himself open, therefore, as an artist, to the dangers that so often beset the didactic writer. The presence in his plays of themes and of subjects, not only setting far-reaching questions, but also suggesting answers to them, might have resulted in bringing about an irreconcilable duality fatal to artistic unity of purpose ; despite all contrary intentions, it might even have led to sacrificing art to philosophy ; either by making too great an appeal to logics and pandering too much to the demands of the intellect for the sake of proving a point, thus diminishing the emotional power essential in drama ; or, by twisting the natural course of human action to fit the needs of sentimental demonstration, were it only to force the issue through presentation of exceptional situations and characters. As a rule, fortunately, this did not happen. Galsworthy, on the contrary, succeeded in transforming perilous possibilities into a valuable assets.

For one thing, his philosophy of life was, as we have already said, rather felt than thought out, and conse-

« my philosophy is merely a belief that if we all understood and « tolerated each other a little more than we do, the world would « be a happier place to live in ». All the problems he sets are soluble by an increase of sympathy and understanding. This philosophy, he goes on to say « has always seemed to me so « primitive and obvious that I have always had a delicacy about « expressing it in so many words » (See MANNOR, pp. 261-263).

(4) See the end of the critic Sydney W. Carroll's defence of « The Ittof », quoted by MANNOR, p. 627. Also notes 11 and 17 of preceding chapter.

quently lent itself better to emotional than to intellectual treatment. He himself was conscious of this quality in his themes and perhaps had it in mind when he declared that he preferred to gain the applause of the General Public rather than that of the Critics, or when he protested against being included in the category of the intellectual dramatists : « The ideas » he writes, in a letter to Mr. Palmer, July 28, 1915, « would hardly fill a « tea-cup, unless by ideas are meant the main lines of « feelings that hold all work together » (5). Those feelings, those serious and emotional ideas at whose service he puts his skill, are variations on love and pity, together with indignation born of love and pity : all of them of the widest, and sometimes strongest, human appeal, and, as such, eminently capable of rousing an audience to a powerful feeling of communion and of establishing the indispensable current of sympathy (one of the factors of dramatic tension) between the individuals that compose the audience and between the audience and the characters (6). The philosophical

(5) MARROT, pp. 734-735.

(6) In the theatre, the disposition defined by Diderot, « suite... « de la mobilité du diaphragme, de la vivacité de l'imagination, « de la délicatesse des nerfs, qui incline à compatir, à frissonner, « à craindre, à se troubler, à pleurer, à s'évanouir, à secourir, à « fuir, à dédaigner, à n'avoir aucune idée précise du vrai, du bon, « du beau, à être injuste, à être fou », is brought about by the flow of collective emotion, through which each spectator communes with his fellow spectators, the actors and the fictitious characters themselves. Says Francisque SANCEY (*Quarante ans de Théâtre*, vol. I, p. 350) : « Chaque spectateur pris à part sait fort « bien que la scène est absurde et ridicule, à la regarder de trop « près. Mais du moment qu'ils sont douze cents réunis, ils « consentent à n'en voir que le côté plaisant ; ils tendent leurs « yeux au bandeau que leur attache l'auteur et ils s'amuse. Que « leur faut-il davantage ? » ; and Ferdinand BRUNETIÈRE in « *Essais sur la Littérature contemporaine* » (« *La Réforme du Théâtre* », p. 279) : « Le théâtre est une action publique.... Il faut « bien que douze ou quinze cents personnes assemblées.... retrou- « vent au théâtre ce qui fait d'elles les parties d'une même « société. » Pierre Aimé TOUCHARD (« *Dionysos* », Paris, 1938), says the same thing in more striking words : « L'atmosphère tra- « gique, ce sont des hommes qui se reconnaissent, qui se recon- « naissent eux, qui se reconnaissent entre eux, qui se reconnais- « sent dans la beauté » (p. 39) ; « Ce qui fait l'atmosphère tragi- « que, ce n'est pas la pièce, c'est le spectateur ; ce qui compte, ce « ne sont pas les personnages en soi, leurs actes en soi, mais leurs « rapports avec le spectateur ». While, however, Ferdinand Bru- netière holds that the drama grew in greatness and artistic value

themes can be best conveyed without laborious demonstrations and ingenious dialectics. The social subjects are not burdened with dissociating emotions ; they show the pathetic vanity of class and group prejudices ; they exhibit no exceptional beings, but treat of the individual's life-long effort, conscious or unconscious, to assert himself against collective psychological obstacles, of violent conflict between varying ideals, varying traditions, varying interests, or between ideal, tradition and interest. In such violent clashes, feeling naturally runs high. And though the clashes may seem at first to involve purely individual struggles and sufferings, we soon perceive that the characters are representative of groups or even of the whole collective body of mankind, and that those situations which life never tires of repeating endlessly, those problems, those struggles, those sufferings are really ours. It ensues that the presentation of those subjects does not foster egotistical enjoyment and interest in each spectator : on the contrary, it projects forward all the spectators in a unanimous movement of self-identification with the persons of the drama, in whose souls and hearts they instinctively recognize their own ; and we know that this form of emotion is specifically dramatic.

as it separated more and more from the Dionysian tradition, M. Touchard, on the contrary, links up this act of emotional communion with the original Dionysian delirium ; the whole of his stimulating little book rests on this notion of « Dionysian tension » : « Peu importe l'union de la crainte à la joie, du grossier au sublime, si rien ne rompt ce que je proposerai d'appeler « la tension dionysiaque de l'œuvre » (p. 25). « J'appelle tension « dionysiaque, cet état où le spectateur se sent lié au destin des « personnages si intimement qu'il perd conscience que ce destin « n'est pas le sien » (p. 31). « Les sociologues nous ont appris « que dans les sociétés primitives il existe une forme de connais- « sance irrationnelle, d'intuition directe qu'ils nomment la parti- « cipation. Le primitif admet qu'il puisse être à la fois lui-même « et autre chose, lui-même et son totem, lui-même et ce prêtre qui « sacrifie au dieu et ce danseur qui imite l'animal dont il souhaite « la reproduction..... Qui irait jusqu'à nier qu'au théâtre il se soit « senti communier avec le personnage qui souffre et qui rit autre- « ment et plus intimement que par son intelligence ? C'est ainsi « que le théâtre est l'objet et le moyen d'un double lien : lien avec « le personnage mystérieux qui est à la fois l'auteur et l'acteur, « et quelqu'un qui est tout à fait différent d'eux, qui est l'auteur, « l'acteur et le spectateur, et quelqu'un d'autre encore ; lien aussi « avec ceux que le hasard a rassemblés dans la salle..... »

Furthermore, Galsworthy's very inconclusiveness, his gentle pessimism tempered by his sense of human brotherhood, do much towards endowing his dramas with genuinely tragic atmosphere. If he proffers no definite answer to so many of the questions he sets, it is partly because those problems admit of no solution ; nothing more than compromise can be suggested. The knowledge gradually dawns upon us that most of the dramas of our lives are the outcome of our own feebleness, in intelligence and in will, before the latent forces dwelling within ourselves and among the powers that surround us. These powers the Greek tragic poets called Fate or the Gods. Although not thus named, they are still to be found around us : and any artistic work which makes us feel their presence really deals with eternal themes. Thus it is with these dramas. From them we derive, although to a lesser degree, the same sense of Life's awful and relentless irony that once baffled *Œdipus'* pitiful efforts to escape his dreaded fate.

The nature and treatment of the social subjects further enhance this tragic impression. Whether the individual allows himself to be swept off the rock of life-long moral standards by the sudden surge of passionate caste-feeling, or tries in vain to solve an insoluble problem with his reason and honest goodwill, or pits the puny strength of his will and intellect against the overwhelming forces of the social body, always it is the heart-rending spectacle of human weakness at odds with something obscure and irresistible, something that will ultimately conquer : although appearances may at times blind us to the real issue at stake. « I do not know », wrote Galsworthy himself in the preface to the *Manaton Edition* of his works, « if it is a discovery of « mine that society stands to the modern individual as « the Gods and elemental forces stood to the individual « Greek... ». Of course it was not. Before him, Ibsen had made use of this tragic aspect of modern life, and Brunetière, for one, had pointed out that social forces might very well, in the drama of the future, be called upon to play the same part as Fate and the Gods had

played in the theatre of the Greeks, and Passion in French seventeenth-century tragedy (7). Nevertheless, though Galsworthy did not invent anything new in this matter, he was clearly conscious of, and clever at, handling possibilities capable of bringing about highly interesting developments in the history of the new drama.

At the same time, Galsworthy's themes being burdened with great human appeal, and his subjects having been enforced upon his attention by his direct contact with life and by his keen observation of character and social milieux, both lend themselves to illustration by gripping dramatic action which also can be so contrived as to give the spectator the impression that what he watches taking place on the stage is the reflection of Life indeed. In the situations and characters we find, depicted in strong colours, the reactions of various individuals to an institution or to a principle, and the opposition between social groups or between society and its members. This determines, at bottom, the nature of the plots, which may easily be reduced to a few models, all equally suitable for dramatic treatment, providing, as they do, the playwright with a variety of striking incidents and combining development through crises with tension through progression in violent emotion. The reactions of the individual to the forces, physical or spiritual, within himself or without, that are the fruit and outcome of life in organized society, may be — short of entire

(7) In « *Etudes critiques* », vol. 7, p. 153, Brunetière says : « Le « drame en général, c'est *Paction*, c'est l'imitation de la vie médiocre et douloureuse ; c'est une représentation de la volonté de l'homme en conflit avec les puissances mystérieuses ou les forces naturelles qui nous limitent ou nous rapetissent ; c'est l'un de nous jeté tout vivant sur la scène pour y lutter contre la fatalité, contre la loi sociale, contre un de ses semblables, contre soi-même au besoin, contre les ambitions, les intérêts, les préjugés, la sottise, la malveillance de ceux qui l'entourent.... » And again, among many others, Pierre Aimé Touchard speaks of the renewal of the « fatality » theme (« *Dionysos* », p. 138) : « Il semble donc que le sentiment d'une *fatalité* est bien nécessaire à toute œuvre dramatique antique ou moderne. Ce qui distingue les dernières des précédentes, c'est seulement l'origine première de la fatalité, due à un caprice des dieux dans la tragédie grecque..... », etc.

submissiveness — active struggle, stubborn resistance, or flight; in the face of several sets of impulses, interests, ideals, wrestling for victory within his heart, he may be called upon to make a momentous choice. Now a fight in several episodes, a story of long resistance and hesitations before an important decision, a tale of flight and of pursuit, of persecutions and narrow escapes, all these mean ceaseless action and a main crisis made up of a series of minor crises, each of them almost complete in itself, yet all working up towards a general resolution. They mean emotion accumulating until it creates an almost unbearable state of tension, that tension which makes the spectator crane forward with sparkling eyes to watch the wrestlers in the ring or the leaders in a race.

II

With Galsworthy, conflict, rampant in open fight or latent in some character's stubborn resistance to external pressure, sets in opposition, as often as natural enemies, persons that should be united by bonds of affection or common interest: the Man of Property and his wife, the idealist and his family, the father and his children. Conspiracy may thus be the natural and concrete outcome of identity of views and interests among members of a social group. Galsworthy uses it as the backbone of many plots; there is family conspiracy in « The Skin Game », and class conspiracy in « The Silver Box »; and we are so made that the spectacle of a conspiracy being hatched always fills us with an apprehension that, in its turn, provokes in us a sensation of cruel delight; nothing tends more towards giving us the Olympian feeling of omniscience, which holds an important place in the pleasures that a drama is intended to dispense to the spectator (8). Add that it

(8) « Thus we see that the greater part of our pleasure arises « from the fact that.... we have a clear vision of all the « circumstances, relations, and implications of a certain

naturally involves many reticences, since the conspirators, feeling at the bottom of their hearts ashamed of themselves, shrink from putting their intentions into plain words : a very ordinary attitude which, used in the drama, easily engenders suspense due to uncertainty about motives and creates a disquieting atmosphere of mystery.

The revolt of the individual against society, and the disproportion between his efforts and the forces of the social body are best made apparent in the crook-story, scenes of interrogation or of cross-examination, and in trial scenes. As has been noted in a preceding chapter, many of Galsworthy's dramas are crook-stories ; « *The Silver Box* » is one ; « *Justice* », too, and « *Loyalties* » ; in all these plays the critics agreed about the efficiency of the plot and its grip on the audience (9). There are at least four or five interrogation scenes in « *The Silver Box* », Mrs. Jones, Jack, the Unknown Lady and Jones being in turn submitted to searching questions ; there are more of them in « *Justice* », in « *The Skin Game* », in « *The Foundations* », in « *Exiled* », in « *Loyalties* », not to speak of the formal and informal trials in the same plays. In all these, gradual revelation of psychology and of past events matters less than its spiritual significance, that of a human being gradually dragged to confusion and ruin, knowing what is happening to him and offering a vain resistance to the tremendous accumulation of odds mustered against him by fate and society ; nothing is more pathetic than the agony of the

« conjuncture of affairs..... we are, in fact, in the position of « superior intelligences contemplating with miraculous clair-voyance, the stumblings and fumbings of poor blind mortals « straying through the labyrinth of life. Our seat in the theatre « is like a throne on the Epicurean Olympus, whence we can view « with perfect intelligence, but without participation or responsibility, the intricate reactions of human destiny ». William Archer, « *Play-making* », p. 131.

(9) See MARROT, pp. 196 and following, and pp. 256 and following. But « *Loyalties* » perhaps made the greatest impression of the three on the general public, probably on account (says Marrot) of its plot being most strongly woven together : « The « reason why the play was so generally welcome is probably to « be found in the comparative preponderance of action and event « over ideology » (p. 516).

creature entrapped, nothing more productive of pity or better calculated to inspire the terrible thought that « There, but for the Grace of God, goes the spectator ». A formal trial, moreover, is drama lifted straight from life. It is hard to imagine what could be added to enhance the scenic effectiveness of such proceedings, with the awful impersonality of the law as represented by its upholders and servants, the repeated words and gestures imposed by its etiquette, the cruel and grotesque delays they occasion in the pursuit of the main issue, the tense development of the action through unvarying stages towards the climax — a decision of such human import and delivered in so few seconds !

What adds to the dramatic value of such stories and developments is that, at no moment, do they run counter to our demand for truth and risk destroying the condition of emotional tension to which the spectator has been brought, by arousing his critical faculty to cavil about their verisimilitude. Of course, Galsworthy obtained this result by various means, some of them appertaining to psychology, to technique, or to the art of preparation ; but he also made a clever use of realism, pressing it into the service of illusion. This realistic quality of his work has already been touched upon. His eye for the genuinely dramatic to be discovered among commonplace happenings, this particular *flair* of his served by powers of keen observation, are brought into play, not only in the main issues of his plots, but in their minor details and incidents as well. The best scene in « The Skin Game » is the auction sale ; and the conflict between two men, heads of two clans and representatives of two classes, is thus concretized in an episode of incomparable tension in which the characters and the audience are closely united, with the passion for victory suddenly running wild ; a seemingly commonplace contest which is here keyed up to a very high pitch, full of unexpected developments, ominous suspense and breath-taking *coups de théâtre*.

Nowhere better than in his *dénouements* can we discern the great harmony achieved by Galsworthy in

bringing together the many elements that go to the composition of his plays. They are strong, capable of producing a dramatic shock, entirely satisfying, and also pregnant with human emotion and expressive of their author's attitude towards society and life.

The *deus ex machina dénouements* are not altogether absent, although realization of this sometimes escapes us, for the reason that all his plays, essentially psychological as they are, have endings in which the psychological factor outweighs in importance the purely physical. Anyhow, it is unquestionable that in « The Show », the resolution of the problem comes without any preparation ; it is something which strikes out of the blue, as it were, and might have occurred at any point in the development of the plot (10). In « Exiled » there is no *dénouement*, properly speaking, the action all taking place at the beginning ; what comes afterwards is a succession of consequences, and a lesson on the irony of life which appears fully in the last scene ; so that the end is rather a « ceasing to be » than a decisive conclusion (11).

In all the other plays, the *dénouement* surprisingly combines the two qualities, of not seeming beforehand the only one possible, and yet of proving, upon reflection.

(10) The plot hinges on a suicide, for which no valid reason can be assigned. Investigations by the police, aided by journalists eager for « copy », provide material for the three acts which make up the play, until towards the end of Act III a letter is produced written by the dead man just prior to taking his life, and explaining his action. Delivery of this letter has been delayed through accidental circumstances, but it is forthcoming in the nick of time, while the Coroner's inquest is being held. Clearly, therefore, the solution of the problem has here been postponed by an external device, without which the whole edifice of the play collapses.

(11) Post-war conditions in England after 1918, the difficulties of readjustment to a new scale of values, form the theme of the drama, the changed order being exemplified in the opposite fortunes of a ruined baronet, one of the « New Poor », and a commercial magnate, one of the « New Rich ». The laming of the race horse which destroys the baronet's last hope of saving something from the wreck occurs at the outset of the play, so that from this moment the hero's doom is sealed. Thereafter, immediate lesser consequences of the same incident are developed, but no intervention of Fate occurs to alter the natural course of affairs and at the close of the play we leave the central figure exactly where he was at the end of the first act.

to be the absolutely necessary issue. Thus, in « Joy », no better line could have been adopted to put an end to the conflict between the two women than showing them both governed by their most egotistical aspirations at the parting of the ways (12). In « Justice », too, this is so ; the release of Falder would have been entirely out of key with the rest of this tragedy, in which is shown the weaker specimen of humanity tracked down by the powerful forces of Society.

Not only do all these *dénouements* represent the conclusion of the plot, subject and theme, but, at the same time, they avoid both poetic justice and the victory of the forces of evil repugnant to our feelings. Now there is no doubt that an audience is not entirely satisfied with a drama showing the unqualified triumph of good over evil. This may be an unjustifiable bias, born of undue pessimism or of some exaggerated regard for verisimilitude, but the playwright has, nevertheless, to take it into consideration, and therefore to find a line of compromise and a *dénouement* that will neither strike his public as artificial nor offend its prejudices. « Othello » is a tragedy, and as such, ends in violence and sacrifice ; but Iago is not left master of the field, and in his act of self-destruction Othello attains great nobility. One solution is to end the tragic drama on a note of compassion, rather than with a scene of unqualified victory.

Generally speaking, Galsworthy's *dénouements* unite a double suggestion of triumph and overthrow : sometimes, it is the triumph of the soul in face of physical collapse or disaster, such as we have in « Strife », « The Mob », « A Bit o' Love », « A Family Man », « Escape », and « The Roof » ; even in « Justice » and « The Fugitive », death comes as a liberation : the

(12) Galsworthy himself pointed out the inevitability of the ending of « Joy » : « A fourth Act showing Molly yielding to Joy or Joy yielding to Molly would be no end. The deep true ending of that situation comes once and for all at the moment that the mother and child find they are no longer first with one or another. It would be no use patching it, for the patch would not close the wound... » (MARNOT, p. 213).

victim escapes from his hunters and takes refuge in the mercy of « Gentle Jesus ». More striking still are those endings where worldly victory ill conceals the inner defeat that dwells in deep-felt humiliation, that of the soul before itself as a judge : we have it in « The Silver Box », in « The Eldest Son », in « The Skin Game ». Galsworthy adopted this sort of solution deliberately and after long discussion with himself and with his friendly critics ; it is similar to the one occurring in his novel « The Man of Property » (13). Besides avoiding a shock to our sense of reality and to our sensibility, these mixed *dénouements* have the advantage of steeping the play in a disquieting atmosphere, where we feel the pervading presence of the thwarting powers of life, ready to make sport of our hopes and to reduce our seeming achievements to ashes.

There was a time when death was considered the only fitting end to a tragic drama ; this was not Galsworthy's view, although he several times made use of this conclusion. And, indeed, it is a very radical and sure way of putting a stop to any conflict or entanglement. But again, it must not be purely accidental. The form of death most closely allied with psychological evolution is death self-inflicted by a deliberate act of volition, such as occurs in « Justice », « The Fugitive », « Loyalties » ; or consciously accepted, as in « The Roof ». In « The Mob », death comes to the hero not in the guise of suicide, but in that of sacrifice of self to an ideal. And anyhow, it appears more or less as a welcome release from the intricacies and disappointments of life. This

(13) See MARROT, pp. 166-170. Edward Garnett wrote (May 27, 1905) : « ...I think the last chapter is better away. I don't think « it strengthens but weakens the final effect. It talks on after « the curtain has dropped. » Besides, he added, it would be better to show the Forsytes defeated by showing Irene and Bosinney going off in triumphant illicit love. Galsworthy replied that Conrad found the last scenes of the book « terrific ». *He too* wanted to show the Forsytes *defeated* and yet enlist sympathies against them — the only way was to show property as an empty shell, by leaving Soames with the appearance of triumph : « We both wish to produce the same effect... Your instinct tells « you to do it positively, you would leave them defeated ; my « instinct tells me that it can only be done by me negatively ; « I would leave them victorious — but what a victory ! »

course was not chosen only in pursuance of a dramatic doctrine ; with Galsworthy it had its origins in a deeply pessimistic psychological theory, according to which the impulse to seek death or to accept it willingly is latent in every individual, and under pressure of extreme circumstances may overmaster the rest of the natural man (14). It is not surprising, feeling as he did, that the playwright should show death divested of its horror, an Angel less of destruction than of clemency. There is great irony in the view that the surest escape, after all our striving, is into nothingness. In « The Man of Property », before alluded to, this solution of all difficulties is handled in an interesting and artistic manner. Bosinney, Irene's lover, is run over in a fog. Galsworthy's first intention was that he should deliberately commit suicide, but after long debate with himself he decided upon a death which should have a probability of accident (15). His hero is struck down by a passing vehicle at a moment when tragic emotion renders him insensible to what is taking place around him, — a masterly touch, suggestive of the littleness and futility of our endeavours and of the insignificance of our sufferings. But, at the same time, there hangs over Bosinney's end a suspicion that death may have been self-sought. To this we find an exact parallel in the play « Justice » ; we never know for certain whether Falder meant to destroy himself or whether Fate has intervened to release him.

(14) Writing to Edward Garnett, June 2, 1905, Galsworthy says : « I think it (suicide) is in every man's character, and in « none, and is the outcome of a mass of circumstances with a « main motif to which accident..... puts the cap ». And to Mrs Garnett, June 14, 1905 : « It (suicide) can only be performed « by a part and a very narrow part of that man, which part has « momentarily become his whole.to my mind... this is strength, « not weakness ; and suicide has always seemed to me, if « anything, an evidence of what is whole-hearted and loveable » (MARROR, p. 176).

(15) See MARROR, pp. 171-172.

III

We hardly ever ask ourselves, where the dramas of Galsworthy are concerned, whether the situations are served by the characters, or, on the contrary, have been imagined for the purpose of setting them in the most revealing light : the two are so closely bound together, just as the plot is with the theme and philosophy with feeling. All of these elements really work together in the most complete harmony. So Galsworthy's plots, subjects and themes having but a limited range, the characters likewise may be said to conform to a few types.

It has been mentioned that the plots illustrate the reactions of, and stage oppositions between, groups or individuals and society envisaged under one of its multifarious aspects. Which implies four possible attitudes : open struggle, resistance, hesitation, and flight ; all being particularly fitted to dramatic treatment, by means of the development of a main crisis through a series of secondary crises, the whole gradually becoming more tense and burdened with more acute emotion. Underneath individual idiosyncracies, it is easy to recognize in the characters the traits common to different groups of imaginary persons involved in these recurring conflicts. Some stand firmly on their positions ; others, possessed of weak will, are ill equipped for self-assertion, and for domination or stubborn resistance in the battle of life. The strong characters are the gentleman and the boor, the diehard and the narrow-minded, the idealist with a definite purpose, rightly or wrongly resolute to let no persuasion or human weakness obstruct its realization. The weak include the pathetic inarticulate (among whom children), the ineffective idealists (sometimes young people), the wasters more sinned against than sinning, victims as they are of circumstances, education, tradition and law. The indulgent and comprehending characters may be either weak or strong, or again take refuge in a cynical attitude.

Women characters play important parts, and Galsworthy at times strikes us as obsessed by the sex question. They are disclosed, indifferently, as victims or persecutors, and seem to belong, save for one or two exceptions, to absolutely different species according to their ages. There is almost an implication that a woman cannot ripen with years, but only go sour. Young girls, beneath surface cynicism and outspokenness, hold in reserve, we feel, great stores of genuine passion ; not stupidly ignorant of the « facts of life », yet always less fully informed than they imagine themselves or pretend to be, they incline to pity and understanding, sharing, as they do, in the great virtues of generosity and loyalty, which, Galsworthy implies, are the precious attributes of adolescence ; but notwithstanding this, we occasionally get glimpses of an underlying hardness and relentless egotism, together with indications that the instinct of the huntress is not lacking in their psychological make-up. Youngish wives, by preference beautiful and endowed with irresistible sex-appeal, are by law helplessly delivered into the power of the male, for the satisfaction of his brutality and of his grossest appetites ; although it would seem, from such plays as « The Mob » and « Strife », that there is left for the husbands hardly any middle course between this attitude of the Man of Property and enslavement to their fair life-partners, who are not chary of using their physical attraction for the purpose of getting their own way. Galsworthy's dramas show us few examples of that unselfish complete companionship which lends dignity to the childless Roberts couple in « Strife », or of such unsullied devotion as Mabel Dancy lavishes on her husband in « Loyalties ». Woman-victims, many in number, may belong to the prostitute, or to the « girl in trouble » category. As to middle-aged wives and those in the sere and yellow season of existence, they are definitely bossy, tyrannical, even ill-natured and malignant, with a particular bias which renders them pitiless regarding the sin of the flesh and obscurely jealous of the physical charm of their younger sisters.

In this respect, Lady Cheshire, in « The Eldest Son », is a bright exception ; yet even *her* husband is, in lesser matters, henpecked.

Round all these figures of major importance appear also some utility characters : very frequently representatives of the social system in their official capacity — judges, lawyers, police inspectors and constables ; servants too, who are not only the well-behaved servants of their betters with a partiality towards their young masters, but the devoted servants of the play, for which they get little kudos ; although in « The Silver Box » and « The Eldest Son », some members of this class are granted prominent parts. Add to all this that besides their direct participation in the drama, some seem to have been born to fulfil some accessory dramatic functions : the cockney, the dull-witted diehard, the cheeky flapper, the cynical old maid or the waiter, to introduce comic relief ; the helpless child, innocent girl or boyish boy, to set the pathetic chord vibrating ; the girl and the old man again, as well as the lawyer or faithful retainer, to provide comments or expositions ; a few, sometimes (like the Window Cleaner), to stand as mere symbols, with not much more substance to them than a mixture of philosophy and grotesque fantasy. Even the most individually drawn characters represent, at the same time, interests, ideas, feelings and traditions of castes and classes, so that it is difficult to know what personally belongs to them and what to their social status.

Moreover, Galsworthy frequently obeys, unconsciously, definite traditions, occasionally originated by himself, but often, also, deriving from the Shavian comedy : a tradition responsible for the recurrence in his theatre of certain dramatic figures. We have already described the women characters, between many of whom there exists a strong family resemblance, especially among those of the thin-lipped or horse-faced species. The flapper hardly ever varies and might find a place in any of Bernard Shaw's comedies. Boys too, if not absolute wasters, invariably show themselves generous, sincere,

absolute ; they are, besides, sometimes inarticulate, and particularly boyish. The spinster in « Joy » we seem to have met somewhere else. So is it with the old diehard, by preference a retired colonel, gruff without, kindly within and stupid all through, save when he shows, for the convenience of the play, brief flashes of amazing insight ; honourable, chivalrous and susceptible to moonlight and unprotected womanhood, especially when the latter happens to be blest with physical attractiveness.

The number of characters in each play is large enough to keep the stage well furnished with action and with a variety of emotions, yet not so large as to bewilder us or to make the drama, for material, financial or other reasons, unactable. Except for collective bodies, such as appear in « The Mob », and « The Foundations », their number generally varies between thirteen and twenty-two ; in « Windows » it is much smaller, but this play strikes us as being unpleasantly thin. These numbers might perhaps seem rather exaggerated if the *dramatis personæ* were mere individuals, each following his own exclusively personal course of action. But they belong to groups, dramatic and social, and thus are placed in perspective, which saves attention from being too much dispersed.

Also, among the fifteen or twenty *dramatis personæ* of a play, the gamut of dramatic importance where the characters may figure is indeed extensive. One or two detach themselves from among their fellows and stand out in the foreground. Although Galsworthy never pandered to the vanity of an actor-manager, in each of his plays will be found one or, may be, several figures that make us feel, without possibility of error, that they are the centre of the action, all interests converging towards them. But, these central figures do not play all the others off the stage, dwarf them by being set up in lonely greatness against a mere background of insignificance. Between such a background and the « hero », there stand a number of *dramatis personæ* who occupy a very honourable second rank : some more,

some less essential, of course, but all moving and reacting according to their individual natures and positions ; and this is as it should be, since the plot of the drama is made up of a combination of minor actions. These secondary characters are, like the protagonist, strong or weak of will ; like him, they give battle, resist, hesitate or take to flight under persecution. Even among the accessory characters, only very few are mere utilities and nothing more, do not have a life of their own and do not, positively, contribute to the development of the action.

This action usually sets before our eyes a two-sided opposition : although it may be three-cornered, as in « Joy », or even polygonal, as in « Strife ». Various characters, or sets of group-characters, representative of two or more diverging forces, strain to impose their wills or to rescue their liberty — pull devil, pull baker ; often, too, a similar tug of war takes place in the soul of the individual. Between the groups or principals in conflict, moreover, will usually be found a handful of *dramatis personæ* acting as a moderating influence, attempting to mollify the strong and obdurate and to defend the weak, making a plea for reasonableness and human sympathy, and, as we realize, viewed with a very partial eye by their author, whose positive creed, in the main, they voice. It goes without saying that this usual pattern suffers some exceptions. In « Joy » the oppositions are variations on the one theme of egotism and the selfishness of mated pairs, and in « A Bit o' Love » the figure that stands for compromise and gentleness paradoxically plays the central part, among groups of secondary characters and elemental impulses that urge him in vain to stubborn resistance or to violent action.

The characters, besides conforming to the dramatic set pattern of the play determined by strict laws and, sometimes, theatrical traditions, also associate together or oppose one another in groups of social significance. The idealist resists the pressure of mob-ignorance and sentimental blackmail ; the victim is persecuted in the name of sacrosanct traditions, law and order, which

afford a glorified disguise for selfishness, cruelty and prejudice represented by hard-hearted ladies, moneyed gentlemen, self-righteous husbands, judges and policemen; rich and poor, county families and commercial upstarts, Christians and Jews, young and old, children and parents, enter into conflict as representatives of castes, classes and generations. Sets of secondary characters provide a social background. Even relations apparently more personal assume wide significance. Joseph Conrad enthusiastically admired the scenic representation of selfishness in love and the association of man and woman as embodied in the four couples representing, in « Joy », four ages of life, all different and yet all fundamentally alike in their *égoïsme à deux* covering still deeper sex antagonism (16). Galsworthy is seldom able to keep away from this question of the battle of the sexes, whether it appears in the unsavoury bargainings of a desirable wife, in the dreadful situation of « immodest » and forsaken young women hunted down by society, or again in the pictures of brutal husbands and bickering old couples where the female occasionally plays the part of an evil counsellor urging reasonable, easy-going, straightforward gentlemen of fifty and upwards on the way to cruelty or moral dishonour. Mothers, otherwise pitiless, dote where their grown-up sons are concerned, whose consciences they help to ruin. The playwright gives us some descriptions of sisters and brothers united by a solidarity of years, and of frequent companionship between irrepressible, irreverent, but earnest young daughters or nieces, and indulgent, kindly, easily scandalized, elderly fathers and uncles; but there is hardly in his dramatic work any picture of purely personal relationships, independent of natural bonds and of social significance, any pictures of « civilized » individual friendships and of « civilized » individual hatreds.

Galsworthy, as a rule, shows remarkable deftness in

(16) See MARROT, pp. 211-212,

this grouping of his *dramatis personæ* with its twofold significance, in the setting-up of involved dramatic combinations, of thought-out parallels and contrasts. Too deftly even, he occasionally creates some characters with the main object of balancing two sets of figures, like partners in a quadrille. This excess of skill and carefulness may become an objectionable feature in his dramas. We are willing to accept this significant symmetry in « The Silver Box » and in « The Eldest Son » for the very reason that, the significance appearing clearly in the light of theme and subject, our attention need not linger on it for a long time : we understand what is meant and we pass on, perhaps deploring on our way the artificiality of the method. But, through repetition, the device is apt to become wearisome ; it causes us to lose sight of the character as a living figure, and gradually to become more concerned with its place in the general pattern : the more involved, crowded and symmetrical the pattern, the more distracted we feel. In « Strife », where such symmetry exists in every detail, we sometimes lose grip of the main issue ; from the moment the strikers' delegates appear on the stage, the absolute counterpart of the capitalist group, our interest wavers between the highly emotional plot and the significance of its several components.

The characters thus being useful to the dramatic plot as well as to the philosophical theme and to the social subject, what scope is there left for real individualization capable of awakening and sustaining our interest in them ? Very little, we might be tempted to think, seeing all their extraneous obligations, and seeing that they have to be, and are, so strictly maintained in the picture. And yet to begin with, Galsworthy does not make much use of them for mere intellectual wrangling, such as we find in Bernard Shaw's comedies (17). The characters, true to themselves and to the situations in

(17) There are some exceptions, though : « Joy », for instance. In the letter previously alluded to (see preceding note), Joseph Conrad writes to Galsworthy : « The only weakness of the play « as a whole (and I don't know that it is a weakness — or a « defect », is a slight effect of wrangling ».

which they are placed, are no mere mouthpieces through which the playwright is content to air his views. Neither are they mere symbols, each of them the algebraic representation of a force. They do not stand uncompromisingly as arguments for the demonstration of a thesis, modelled with a bias so that the whole weight of every one of them shall help to prove or disprove a point. Also, we do not feel that they are forced into their various parts as depersonalized puppets might be, or were meant to be (as for a long time remained the custom in comedy), each the embodiment of one passion. We find proof enough, in Galsworthy's notes and correspondence, that he studied the psychological possibilities in them minutely and treated them, once created, as he would human beings liable or not to act and feel in some one or other way, given specific circumstances. His theory was that the playwright ought to keep his plays open for various developments and not model them, from the first to the last line, on some *a priori* scheme of plot with every detail foreseen ; and that he should, after he had conceived his characters, watch them live freely and of themselves, make their own gestures and speak their own words (18).

In order to lend these figures the dramatic stability indispensable in all plays that set themselves out to be something other than realistic studies of psychological cases, as well as to keep them capable of the variations that, being the sign of underlying action, we expect in a dramatic work, and to cause us to recognize in them, rightly or wrongly, the fluid uncertainty of Life itself, Galsworthy deliberately applies a method which we might call, using his own term, that of the keynotes.

A keynote is the dominant and permanent feature by which each individual character can be identified and by means of which his actions in the play can generally be accounted for : « The keynote of Barthwick », says

(18) « The dramatist who hangs his characters to his plots, « instead of hanging his plot to his characters, is guilty of « cardinal sin ». (« Some Platitudes concerning Drama », « *The Inn of Tranquillity* », Tauchnitz, p. 193).

Galsworthy, in a letter written about « The Silver Box » (19), « is *want of courage*. He thinks himself « full of *principle* and invariably *compromises* in the « face of facts. The key-note of Mrs. Barthwick is « want of imagination. Her imagination is only once « aroused and that by a *personal* touch, viz : by the « child's crying at the end of Act II. You are very « likely right about Miss Haydon, but if she is cast for « the part I should want to have a talk with her after « she has read it but *before* she begins rehearsing. « Mrs. Barthwick is not more than fifty and well « preserved. The key-note of Jack is want of *principle* « derived from Barthwick, and courage by *fits and* « *starts* derived from Mrs. Barthwick. The key-note of « Jones is *smouldering revolt*. The key-note of « Mrs. Jones is *passivity* and she must not be played « pathetically, only *be* pathetic from force of circum- « stances. »

We ought to find it comparatively easy thus to label every character in Galsworthy's works, by mentioning his psychological key-note together with his social significance. Their author never presents (except, perhaps, in « The Pigeon »), a complete character ; nothing appears in a drama of his, beyond whatever impulses and interest really belong to the drama through affinity with theme, subject and plot : one aspect, or two complementary aspects of each personality are revealed, and little more. Here is artificiality indeed, but artificiality is the rule in the theatre ; and it is the part of the playwright to make his spectators forget about it, to « take them in » (20), and to foster illusion so that they become convinced that what they are watching is the truthful portrait of human nature.

(19) To H. Granville Barker, April 19, 1906 (MARROT, pp. 191-192).

(20) See FRANCISQUE SANCEY, « Quarante ans de Théâtre », vol. I, p. 69 : « Le théâtre, comme les autres arts après tout, n'est qu'une « magnifique tromperie. Il n'a point pour objet la vérité vraie, « mais la vraisemblance. » Et p. 108 : « En art dramatique on n'a « point affaire à un philosophe, mais à douze cents spectateurs « qui sentent ; on a cause gagnée quand on trouve moyen, fût-ce « contre tout bon sens et toute vérité, de les étourdir et de les « mettre dedans. »

This Galsworthy manages to do. Within the narrow field allotted to the display of their personalities, his characters do not give us the impression of being cramped or incompletely drawn. Variations on the key-note always occur, cases of conscience take place, widely different mental attitudes are disclosed, which create the necessary illusion of complexity. The number of the persons who draw one another out and reveal one another through exchanges and reflections adds to this illusion. Some even escape from the didactic and dramatic necessities or conventions and, in a small measure, grow out of their author's hands; they are, as a rule, background figures of minor import, with, generally, no decisive action on the plot. The waiter and the guests of the hotel in the last act of « *The Fugitive* », Gilman, « head of Gilman's Department Stores », and the Italian wine-merchant in « *Loyalties* », Mrs. Roberts and some other female figures in « *Strife* », owe more to detached observation of life than to exigencies of technique.

As for the others, down to the crowds and atmosphere-characters, all are endowed with a life and personality of their own, be it only sketchy and schematic. Even among the collective bodies that are given a place on the stage or make up a necessary background, very few are as anonymous as they are in « *The Foundations* »: individual figures stand out of the crowd for a few seconds in « *The Mob* », representatives of social groups, but also acting for themselves and according to impulses of their own. In « *A Bit o' Love* » and in the last act of « *The Fugitive* » this individualization is very real indeed, and such that we do not at once perceive that we are in the presence of a group-character playing a part collectively.

The properly individualized characters are drawn with just enough contradiction in them, just enough inconsistency and mixture of good and evil, of fundamentally personal features, and reflections from their social backgrounds and circumstances, to appear life-like. The protagonists even, when weak of will and in

plays where uncertainty and hesitation hold the chief place, lend themselves to some subtle studies of delicate light and shade : the curate in « A Bit o' Love », even Jack in « The Silver Box », and Falder in « Justice » display contradictions and uncertainty of action which appertain to life at least as much as to the stage tradition. Not to speak of « The Pigeon » and « Joy », where interest in psychology was obviously at the source of the playwright's inspiration. Moreover, what the characters may lose in breadth, they regain in power ; all struggle with varying success for self-assertion ; and the emotional note is pitched very high, so that the throb of life is felt throughout, which could not happen with allegorical figures pure and simple.

It may, with truth, be said that, properly speaking, many of Galsworthy's characters lack evolution. This is partly attributable to the author and partly also to the time-limitation in drama. Gradual alteration in personality may feed the plot of a novel, but in most plays everything happens too quickly for any but sudden revulsions of feeling under shock. Galsworthy studies slow degradation of character in « The Fugitive ». In « Joy » there is more sudden though very real change, since the girl is taken in a crucial moment of her life, when womanhood is ready to emerge from childhood. As a rule, though, the crisis brings out, in a violent act of self-assertion or liberation, forces already latent in the characters, and displays personalities at the moment when intense emotion gives them unaccustomed relief. If this is not actual psychological evolution, it is at any rate a good, satisfying imitation of it.

All these characters which we appreciate as works of art we also feel for, as we should for creatures of flesh and blood. Not only do they move and speak, resist and fight, love and hate and suffer, but in their action we recognize, or think we recognize, a true image of human life. This is due to their unspectacular background, to the situations with which we see them confronted, to their restrained ways of expressing themselves ; it is also due to the art their creator displays in inducing us

to accept without cavilling their most violent gestures and emotions, by bringing us each time through clever dramatic preparation to the necessary point of tension that blurs critical sense and silences objection. Our acceptance of, and communion with, the characters is in direct ratio with the author's ability for inventing plots and situations that grip us, and with his capacity for conveying his own emotion. For he has created them, not merely lifted them from the actual world. His realism is born of art, not of servility. The only person in his plays painted from an authentic living model, that of Ferrand in « The Pigeon », is also, according to Galsworthy's own admission, the most fantastical. Rarely does the author fail to rouse our human sympathy for all the imaginary beings that people his stage, for the very contradictions and weaknesses they carry in themselves. Clare, the « Fugitive », is perhaps the one that we find most repellent. But if she does not appeal to us, if many share about her the impression of Gerald Du Maurier who refused to stage the play (21), we must look for the reason elsewhere than in some possible lack of human qualities in the character. The truth is that this drama in itself violates our inmost sentiments, because it drags upon the stage for shameless exhibition a side of our physical and emotional life that long traditions have accustomed us to consider as most private, as though the playwright were confiding to an assembled audience his own *secrets d'alcôve*; and we find it difficult to admire its main character because many of us are deeply at variance with the ideal of womanhood and of matrimonial or extra-matrimonial love that is proposed to us by the creator.

As a whole, however, Galsworthy's dramatic characters satisfy most requirements; they are conceived so as to fulfil their various obligations harmoniously enough not

(21) Letter of June 3, 1913 (MARROT, p. 371), from Gerald Du Maurier to John Galsworthy: « It isn't that I do not care for the play or think it would fail. I positively *dislike* it, even if it were to be an enormous success ».

to leave us with a sense of disappointment, as it would be, were they lacking in significance, efficiency and human interest. In the handling of them, as in the handling of plots and of subjects apart from which they cannot be considered or judged, the playwright brought the demands of drama, ideals, and truth, into happy collaboration. Thanks to his self-discipline, added to natural habits of reserve and restraint, and, under this frigid appearance, thanks to his propensity to perceive spiritual and physical facts through emotion and through sentimental experience, none of the three was sacrificed ; furthermore, each was the better satisfied for the recognition of the other two. Thus it is that Galsworthy's work generally manages to lift his audiences into a state of high philosophical, humanitarian, and dramatic emotion whereby « vision may be « enlarged, imagination livened and understanding « promoted » (22).

(22) See Galsworthy's preface to his own plays in the Manaton Edition. The happy balance struck between elements so often opposed is a distinguishing quality of the Galsworthian drama. Whatever question is set (social and philosophical), the playwright makes his appeal to emotion, not to intellect, and respects psychological truth, so that his work is very different from « the thesis-play proper invented by Dumas the younger, which, said « Walkley (« *Drama and Life* », p. 31), deals with a particular « proposition and is constructed, from first to last, to demonstrate « that proposition ». The same writer added (« *Drama and Life* », p. 50), thus defining the very condition almost invariably fulfilled by the plays of Galsworthy : « Plays of ideas must, first « of all, be plays of emotion. The idea is excellent, as giving a « meaning and unity to the play..... but must not impair the sense « of reality or flow of emotion. »

CHAPTER IV

1. ACTS AND SCENES. — 2. ACTION AND PATTERNS. —
3. BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END.

I

The presence of the minor crises within the main crisis of a play is physically manifested by the division into acts. An act should, as a rule, present a whole development with an internal movement of its own and with its own partial solution, and yet not be entirely self-contained but help with its specific function towards the resolution of the whole. And the same might be said in many cases of the smaller action-units within each act.

Most of Galsworthy's plays are, as has already been mentioned, divided into several acts (1) : that is, into acts proper, and not (as it is with « The Roof ») into what Henri Becque would have called « *tableaux* », practically self-contained and hardly carried along together in an all-powerful stream of action — or (as it is with « Escape ») into episodes just marking time-divisions and incidents in the catenary succession of a story. His acts are further formally divided into what

(1) Not always so with Bernard Shaw, for instance. In « *Getting Married* » he renounced the division into acts, thus making a pretence of returning to the unity of the ancient Greek drama. (See prefatory note). In « *Play-making* », first published in 1912, W. Archer remarks : « Both in theory and in practice, of late years, war has been declared in certain quarters against the division of a play into acts » (p. 102).

Galsworthy termed « scenes ». These are not the *scènes* of the French drama; they are very little different from acts proper, except in the matter of length and duration (2). For each of them contains the complete development of a full minor crisis, occurring at the same place and in uninterrupted succession, the curtain being dropped for a few seconds in the course of the act so as to permit of a quick alteration of the setting or to mark a lapse of time (3). Also, each of them is composed of several smaller scene-units constituted by single phases of action taking place among a specific group of characters, separated from the rest by important entrances and exits, but not by any dropping of the curtain and not infrequently brought to a momentary resolution only to be followed by immediate reopening of the action (4). And even in these, close scrutiny will perhaps discern successive movements of the dialogue, each leading to some decisive cue which, for an instant, stands as a natural conclusion to this movement.

There is little originality in this division and subdivision of Galsworthy's dramas. Even the convenient device of dropping the curtain during the course of the act had been used by Pinero before Galsworthy, and praised by William Archer (5). All the same, the care

(2) About the divisions of the play, see W. Archer, « *Play-making* » (pp. 102 and following) : « An act may be defined as « any part of a given crisis which works itself out at one time » and in one place ; but more fundamentally, it is a segment of « the action during which the author desires to hold the attention « of his audience unbroken and unrelaxed » (p. 108). « There is « undoubted convenience in the rule of the modern stage : One « act one scene » (p. 108). « But one frequently sees a melodrama « divided into « five acts and eight *tableaux* » or even more ; « which practically means that the play is in eight, nine or ten « acts..... » (p. 107). Here the word « *tableau* » has a different meaning from the one given it by the French naturalistic school. William Archer does not mention the formal division of the act into *scènes*.

(3) This device was used even in his first play, « *The Silver Box* ».

(4) This indeed corresponds to the French *scène*. But there is no formal indication of these subdivisions in the text of the plays.

(5) See « *Play-making* », p. 109 : « Sir Arthur Pinero employs « this device with good effect in *Iris* ; so does Mr. Granville « Barker in *Waste* and Mr. Galsworthy in *The Silver Box*. It is « certainly far preferable to that ideal treatment of time which « was common in the French drama of the nineteenth century,

and deliberate skill that presided over the application of this method, imply at least that the playwright fully understood the primordial dramatic necessity for organic unity, and was prepared to bestow his attention on the architectural style that could most surely promote it. Moreover, he was wedded to no specific school, but turned to his own use whatever process he deemed fit to combine flexibility with sound construction.

As we consider the formal structure of his work, we may find it significant enough that, out of twenty major plays, fifteen are in three acts; which division may, according to William Archer (6), be viewed as best corresponding to the three movements defined in Aristotle's principle that a play must have a beginning, a middle and an end. But there are also four-act plays, four in all, whose chronological place among the others is instructive. They occur very early in their author's career; three of them follow closely upon one another after « *The Eldest Son* »; then « *The Pigeon* », a three-act comedy, intervenes between the third and fourth of the four-act dramas. Moreover, after this new departure the former strict three-act model only recurs three times, in « *Windows* », « *The Foundations* » and « *The Show* »; in the other later plays it seems that the reversion to the three-act structure has only been made possible by the subdivision of the last act into two scenes, while in the first three-act plays (four in

« and survives to this day in plays adapted or imitated from the « French ». The date of *Iris* was 1901, those of *Waste* and *The Silver Box* respectively 1907 and 1906.

(6) : It was doubtless the necessity for marking this rhythm « that Aristotle had in mind when he said that a dramatic action « must have a beginning, a middle and an end. Taken in its « simplicity, this principle would indicate the Three Act division « as the ideal scheme for a play. As a matter of fact, many of « the best modern plays in all languages fall into three acts... » (Among such William Archer quotes *The Silver Box*). « And « furthermore, many old plays which are nominally in five acts « really fall into a triple rhythm, and might better have been « divided into three. Alexandrian precept, handed on by Horace, « gave to the five act division a purely arbitrary sanction which « induced playwrights to mark the natural rhythm of their « themes beneath this artificial one ». (W. ARCHER : « *Play-making* », p. 107).

number), the last act was in no case subdivided. It thus looks as though Galsworthy had been for some time satisfied with the real three-act movement and had come afterwards to find it cramping. Although for some reason, out of faithfulness to the previous pattern, he seemed to return to it, this was only in appearance, the general tendency in his work being to evolve from simpler to more composite novels, from simpler plays to plays in which divisions and subdivisions are multiplied.

The unity achieved in all these, from the simplest to the most complex, does not consist in the superficial, long exploded unities of time or place. Galsworthy has no prejudice for or against them ; he does not even, we feel, think about them. The period over which his plays are spread varies between six hours and two and a half years. This time may fall regularly into the various play-divisions, with fairly equal lapses between them, but more often it is divided into two periods, marking two sets of events separated by a long lapse, while the incidents within each set follow closely on one another's heels. And when we speak of the divisions of the play, it must be remembered that we mean scenes as well as acts, for a long lapse of time may separate two scenes, while two acts may follow quickly one upon the other. For the unity of place Galsworthy perhaps showed more respect than for the unity of time ; he has even given us a model drama in which, from first to last, there is no change of setting, the only modification of the scenery being an alteration in the lighting and the putting up of a few Chinese lanterns. This is « Joy », where everything also happens within the limit of twenty-four hours, an example being thus provided of perfect unity in time and place. Our curiosity is pleasurably tickled by this formal achievement. But we should not like the experiment, which might almost have been the result of a wager, to be often repeated. We much prefer Galsworthy to follow, concerning this long controverted point of dramatic technique, no law but that of complete liberty ; to let himself be guided by the

necessities of each of his individual stories, and to reserve his whole attention for the much more important matters of the unity of action and the unity of architecture.

To promote these he makes a judicious use of play-divisions and of changes of settings. For one thing, as a general rule, however frequent the changes of scene, the places where the phases of the action successively take place are never very far from each other, with the exception of a few later dramas, such as « The Forest » and « Escape ». Moreover, a certain number of changes does not mean the same number of different settings, for the same setting may reappear several times. A favorite practice with Galsworthy is to employ the same setting in the first and last scenes, with different ones in the middle scenes, so as to suggest that the conclusion brings us back, face to face, with the initial problem and situation, and that the intervening developments are enclosed in a very solid structure (7). In the unfolding of the intrigue, the action, as will appear later, is generally well knit together through all its successive stages, although some acts and scenes may be found which are extraneous to the story, or simply separated from the main body of it and almost complete in themselves: the presence of these preludes, epilogues and interludes cannot always be satisfactorily accounted for. In « The Silver Box », the first scene of the first act is so self-contained that it is really a little play as it stands, like the epilogue in « The Fugitive ». But these are, anyhow, justified by the fact that they are necessary to the action, since they contain the

(7) In « A Family Man », the first curtain rises on John Builder and his wife in Builder's study; after the intervening scenes, which include a studio in another part of the town and the office of the mayor of Breconridge, the last act brings us back again to Builder's study, where he and his wife are left sitting when the final curtain drops. In « The Skin Game », Act I is in Hillerist's study; thence we go to the hotel where the auction sale is held and, later, to Cloe's bedroom in Hornflower's house. In Act III, which ends the play, we return to Hillerist's study. These are only two out of the many instances where this device is used.

explanation or the resolution of following or preceding events. We shall see that it is not always so with the interludes and insertions.

II

The most elementary sort of play is, of course, that in which we see one line of actions merely succeeding one another like the links of a chain. There are not many of these in Galsworthy's work, although « *The Fugitive* » and « *The Mob* », not to speak of the episodic play « *Escape* », where the leading character hardly ever leaves the stage, come very near to this definition. In « *The Mob* », which is a story of fidelity to an ideal, the interest centres entirely upon Stephen More. Each succeeding scene shows him attacked by one opponent or another : his political associates, his former friends, even his wife ; or he is seen in conflict with himself. Finally, a martyr to his ideals, he is killed by an angry crowd who break into his house. « *The Fugitive* » also is a biographical drama, in the sense that it is concerned solely with following the fortunes of the central character, Clare, with little regard for all the others. The latter, not excepting Clare's husband, George and her lover Malise, drop out of the play before the end and we hear of them no more. We might consider that « *The Fugitive* » is really constructed according to the principle of insertion, rather than catenary succession, since the first and last episodes are closely connected together, while the middle portion deals wholly with the affair between Clare and Malise. Yet it would seem that the author's intention was rather to show a series of vicissitudes and that he was betrayed by the exaggerated importance assumed by the adventure with Malise in comparison with the rest of the play.

As a rule, Galsworthy favours less simple plots. What he prefers is a good, fairly complex story, duly in perspective, which by adroit handling he knows how to turn to best advantage. In such a story, while the

opposition between two social groups, or between a central character and a group, provides him with his main plot, he cleverly makes use of the divisions and personal relationships within each group to provoke subsidiary interest, until the whole merges, towards the end, into one big issue which can be resolved at one blow ; or until, the big issue being resolved, all the secondary ones, which have been momentarily brought together and into the limelight, resume their independence and insignificance, sink again into the dead waters of daily routine, and cease to engross us. Be that as it may, while they were under our notice, they were all joined together in a common stream of incidents, made up of several currents, distinct and yet not independent from one another, the main course of the movement being almost always easily discernible among the side issues.

Parallel development of several important threads of intrigue, not clearly connected, or with very slender apparent links between them, is hopelessly non-dramatic, unless its justification be the presence, under external disconnection, of a subtle, but very real, all-embracing unity of theme, psychology and emotion. « Exiled » is an example of such a play. Sir Charles Denbury has been ruined by the war of 1914. He has a chance, his only one, of making money with a horse which he has entered for a forthcoming race, but if this horse is beaten Sir Charles will have to go abroad. The only serious rival is a racer owned by Sir John Mazer, a commercial magnate whose fortune has been made during the war and has permitted him, among other things, to buy up the Denbury estate. On the day of the race, Sir Charles's horse is lamed by a tramp who has a grudge against Mazer and believes it to be the latter's horse that he is injuring. The tramp is another war victim — deserted by his wife while he was a soldier, unable to find work since his return. It transpires that he has lately come across his wife again, in a police court, where she was being charged with street-walking. Unable to pay her fine, she has been sentenced by Mazer, who is a J. P. ;

hence the tramp's grievance, for he is still attached to his wife. Sir Charles's racer is irretrievably injured, but no good can come from prosecuting the tramp ; and he drifts away with his companion. Denbury himself has no resource but to return to Africa. Thus, his personal disaster and the sordid tragedy of the tramp both have their origins in post-war social conditions, the same conditions that have brought success for Sir John Mazer. The unity of « Exiled » as a study in psychology appears clearly enough, but unfortunately, as a drama, it is rambling and ill-conducted.

In « Joy » it is the under-lying general theme of human egotism, reappearing under different visages in every individual and every couple taking part in the action, that binds the play together. Here we have a main line of interest (the conflict between Joy and her mother), and several minor plots running side by side : the love story of Joy and Dick, the affair between Mrs. Gwyn and Lever, the incident of the mining speculation involving the Colonel and Lever ; each and all of which are connected with the main theme, or bear reference to the main characters, or disclose different aspects of the same sentiment (8). But although they progress on parallel lines for a certain time, some of the subsidiary plots are discarded before the end : the gold mine incident is very nearly left in the air ; the relationship between Mrs. Gwyn and Lever remains pretty much what it was, though we feel dissolution is threatening. Only the love story of Joy and Dick is finally rounded off before the last curtain.

Galsworthy, however, usually applies another method, one at the same time more obvious and affording better

(8) In the « *New Readers' Library* » edition of 1930, this play is preceded by the note : « Joy, a play on the letter J ». Even the kindly colonel displays egotism. He lacks the sympathy that would enable him sometimes to share somebody else's point of view. He overworks the first person pronoun which, in his mouth, is almost always emphasized. (Galsworthy shows by the use of italics that he meant it so) : « I don't suppose there's another case in the army of a man being treated as *I've* been ». « If I want five shillings for a charity or what not, I have to whistle for it... », etc. And he is not above appreciating money easily gotten.

scope for the display of technical ingenuity. Together with a law of steady progression, his dramas obey a law of steady concentration, all the lines of action gradually converging, in a succession of causes and consequences, towards their common resolution. For this purpose, the pattern adopted is that of the herringbone or of the fan. The central plot is approached from different angles, and all the side currents thus started eventually meet it, either at different points, as in « The Silver Box », « A Family Man » and « The Eldest Son », or at the same point, as in « The Roof ».

Take, for instance, « The Eldest Son ». Bill, the heir to the title and estate of a county family, has had an intrigue with Freda Studdenham, a gamekeeper's daughter and maid to Bill's mother. The girl breaks to him the news that she is expecting a child. He, in his turn, has to acquaint his family with the situation and face his father who has already some plans touching his son's future ; and a decision must be made whether or not Bill shall marry Freda, to whom he is not at bottom deeply attached. It is a question of abstract honour on one hand, with unconventional commonsense and orthodox ideas of social prestige on the other. The young man is for taking the « honourable » course ; most members of his family, especially the older ones, oppose him — his mother because such a marriage must lead to unhappiness for both partners, his father because of the scandal and the mud it would spatter upon the family good name. Sir William finally threatens to cut him off with a shilling if he perseveres in his determination, but Bill holds out, although he has not been educated for any profession, has spent money freely hitherto, and depends entirely on his father for maintenance. Lady Cheshire, on the other hand, though she cannot but deplore such a union, will not desert her son. Freda and Studdenham are summoned before the family assembly. There is a violent reaction on the gamekeeper's part when he learns the shameful truth, but when Freda proudly rejects Bill's offer of marriage, feeling it to be inspired by a sense of duty, he sides with

his daughter and shakes the dust of the Cheshire house off his feet.

The main action of the play is centred round the two young people ; its successive episodes are Freda's revelation to Bill, the coming to a decision by the latter, his conflict with Sir William and then with Studdenham, and the final general explanation that brings about the conclusion of the play. In this central triangular encounter, the Freda and Bill couple face the menace of being crushed or humiliated by a world of traditions, mainly represented by the Cheshire family, as a whole. But along with this major plot, there are many side issues, struggles within individual consciences, clashes and discussions between characters dissociated from their respective groups. Bill has misgivings about the wisdom of the course he chooses to follow ; his mother is torn between love, prudence and loyalty ; Sir William, who lays down strict rules about honour, has to go against his creed and eat his words when his own good name is involved. Freda and Studdenham revolt at the last against convention, and by their revolt regain both their freedom and their self-respect. Furthermore, before the two sets of characters are arrayed for the final onslaught, they have to be informed of the facts and to make their positions known in a succession of interviews and discussions with Bill ; all try to influence one another. Besides all this, there is the tale of the two young villagers, pressed by public opinion and by Sir William, in the name of morals and duty, into a marriage bound to end in disaster : this subsidiary plot, outside the main one, of which it is the counterpart, is used as a foil and sets off the theme (9). The drawing-room rehearsal of the play « Caste », and the budding idyll between Bill and Mabel, a girl of his own class, are two insertions, the first burdened

(9) The presence of a subsidiary plot repeating the main one in undertones is nothing new ; the device is used in « *King Lear* », in « *The Merchant of Venice* », etc. But here the underplot is very emphatically used to underline the theme, passing allusions being made to it, so to speak, whenever a reminder of the abstract question has become necessary.

with transparent symbolism and biting irony, the second introduced further to complicate the central situation, but also, and more particularly, to bring out the characters of Bill and of Freda.

The drama comprises three acts, the first of which is divided into two scenes. But, as a matter of fact, the second of these scenes contains three principal scene-units, and the first act, therefore, actually develops in four distinct, equally important, movements. The first scene contains the exposition proper and the suggestion of a menace as well as the indication of a social subject, hingeing on class and caste. Then, in the second scene, occur in succession the introduction of the theme (in a discussion about the unfortunate village scandal), the indication of Bill's position as an eldest son and with reference to Mabel, and, following this scene of preparation, the actual *déclenchement* of the plot with the short dialogue culminating in Freda's dramatic revelation to Bill. The third, and last act, although not formally cut into two scenes by the dropping of the curtain, nevertheless contains two very distinct parts; the second of these, bringing in the double-barrelled conclusion of the play, begins with the entrance of Studdenham, which makes complete the gathering of the clans for the expected clash; after which the groups will apparently break up again into individuals, and life, we gather, resume its wonted course for all concerned, free from such alarums and excursions.

The « middle » of the drama, therefore, comprises, besides the second act, the end of the first and the beginning of the last. All through it, the main stream of action, that is, the conflict between Bill and the caste conventions represented by his father, runs forward, swollen by the influx of the subsidiary issues that meet it at various points; as more characters become acquainted with the nature of the crisis, and make up their minds about it, they are marshalled into place in support of one or the other possible solutions; thus the conclusion of their own individual problems is a preparation for further action; Bill's brothers and

sisters take sides, one by one ; Lady Cheshire's conversations with Bill, Freda and Sir William are followed by her final decision ; the outcome of the sordid village love story, first spoken about in the opening act, is announced very late in the play and is immediately followed by the sudden revelation to her father of Freda's dishonour, this just in time to rush him into place for the concluding dispute. Meanwhile, the episodes of Mabel and the rehearsal, with other short parenthetical dialogues, have been cleverly used to enhance tension or to bring relief at suitable moments. The architectural, organic unity conferred upon this drama by the very pattern of the action, is much more valuable than the unity of place, scrupulously observed nevertheless, since the various scenes and acts are set in different parts of the Cheshire house, and than the unity of time, that crowds too many events into a hectic twenty-four hours.

In « The Roof », the law of structural concentration works in another way. The theme is, of course, philosophical : the eternal mystery of each individual human being for his fellows, from whom the deepest springs of his actions are forever hidden, coupled with the idea that at the moment of supreme crisis, death or the menace of death, the meanest soul may slough off its baser coverings to reveal itself as not unworthy. Plot, properly speaking, there is none. A single event momentarily unites in a common danger a heterogeneous collection of people having otherwise no connection with one another. A fire breaks out on the ground floor of a Paris hotel. It has been started, in a fit of drunken spite, by one of the guests as a practical joke upon an unoffending little waiter. Unfortunately, the joke goes further than its perpetrator had anticipated : flames rapidly gain the upper storeys of the building, the occupants of which are shown, one after another, making their escape by the roof. In the end, everyone is rescued and goes upon his way again, with the exception of Bryce, the original culprit, who saves the life of the waiter at the cost of his own. There is no division into

acts : the play consists of seven scenes, all taking place in the hotel, each with a change of setting. The first six are, in the time of the drama, simultaneous : that is, the action in all of them begins at the same hour, eleven o'clock in the evening — and continues until the alarm is given, twenty minutes later. These separate scenes introduce us to independent groups of characters and are just ample enough to fix, as it were, the portrait of each member, before all the characters find themselves assembled for the final scene on the roof of the burning building. In such a play we may hardly expect to find a sustained major intrigue, running from beginning to end, and supported by minor developments. The plot is, so to speak, equally divided between the six first scenes ; its various branches meet for the opening of the seventh : an example of the perfect fan-like pattern.

The great impression of unity at which Galsworthy so consistently aims and which he so often achieves is, nevertheless, occasionally broken by the inclusion of episodes not really vital to the action, or apparently separated from its main trend either by too considerable a lapse of time or radical changes in place and character. Occasionally too, through unfortunate experiments in technique, or, more often, through being carried away by a social preoccupation, Galsworthy runs off the straight line of natural development, or stops its movement with a social picture.

Although the interesting herringbone pattern is a favourite with Galsworthy, the dramatist seems to have a partiality as well for certain methods liable to weaken his work and to deprive it of the compact unity which it might otherwise attain. It may happen that some plots, or sets of characters, vanish into nothingness, or are shown for a moment and then abandoned, or belong to different parts of the story and so do not meet with one another. In « Joy », one of the parallel intrigues — that of the Colonel's financial ventures — peters out and is resolved off-stage (10). In « The Mob » and « The

(10) The conclusion of this line of the action has taken place between the acts, and is related by the colonel in Act III ;

Fugitive », there appear different groups of characters between whom the only link is the central figure of the play. In the former, the members of More's political circle, his wife and her relations, as well as the anonymous crowds introduced twice in the drama have no connection with one another apart from More himself, and once they leave his orbit of action they disappear from the play. The same thing applies to Clare and the people around her in « The Fugitive ». « Escape » is built entirely upon such lines, being a series of detached episodes in the life of the main character. Mark Dennant, in the short space of time between his breaking prison and his recapture, comes in contact with various persons, none of whom has any existence in the drama other than that arising out of some momentary relationship with Dennant.

In « The Silver Box » and in « Justice » there are the subsidiary incidents of the police-court and the prison. In « Loyalties », the introduction of Gilman and of the Italian wine-merchant in Act III, Sc. 1, with the latter's story of Dancy's discarded mistress, is something extraneous to the central problem, all the elements of which have been (or should have been) supplied at the outset. Thus there possibly is here a twofold error : very late in the play two new characters are brought in, our interest is focussed upon them for a moment, and they then vanish from our ken, while with them is suddenly revealed a secondary issue, not arising directly out of the anterior action ; and this issue, although it assists in preparing the major crisis, does not, itself, reach any fixed point of resolution. There is some similarity between this and the story of Cloe in « The Skin Game ». It will be remembered that the

« I like your friend Lever, Molly. He came to me before dinner quite distressed about your Aunt, beggin' me not to take those shares. She'll be the first to worry me, but he made such a point of it, poor chap — in the end I was obliged to say I wouldn't. I thought it showed very nice feeling ». There is, of course, a fine mixture of irony and pathos in the colonel's readiness to take things at their face value. It is nevertheless a summary ending to a story that has taken up a lot of room on the stage.

unhappy past life of Hornblower's daughter-in-law, Cloe, is the weapon ultimately used by the Hillerists to oust him from the county. At the same time, so much importance is given in Scene II of Act II to Cloe's history that the centre of interest in the play is appreciably shifted for the time being, and it is Cloe herself that engrosses us, rather than the Hillerist-Hornblower feud. There is also the curious incident in the same scene of the lady's maid: her movements arouse curiosity which is never satisfied — she is shown as spying upon her mistress, but we do not hear the results of her eavesdropping. It is permissible to suppose that, occasionally, defects of this nature are born of Galsworthy's realization that his play is rather thin and that he has, as it were, to pad it out with extraneous matter. While, on some other occasions he launches into these superfluous developments either for the sake of realism, or because he is unconsciously carried away by his social subject.

Again, in the composite plots, the main story may not stand out so clearly as the inspiring theme. Several social problems being at issue, it sometimes happens that they are illustrated by a story also divided into several distinct parts, or that one of the subsidiary questions takes hold of the author's mind, with the consequent transference of the main interest from one story and one set of persons to another in the course of the drama. In « The Forest », the two periods of the drama are not only widely separated in time and distance, but each of them stages almost a particular story of its own, with the characters belonging to it, instead of such characters appearing all through the whole succession of acts, from the first to the last. The trial scene in « The Silver Box », the prison act in « Justice », to which we have already referred, various prologues, interludes and epilogues, likewise make use of figures brought forward for a special purpose and meant to disappear again for ever after they have played a very momentary part.

The gradual disclosure of the real centre of interest together with the gradual emerging of the central figures

from among less important ones, is not in itself a defect. But it must involve no shifting over from one strand of the plot to another and the main characters ought to be slowly brought forward from general initial insignificance, not made to step into the front rank by pushing aside somebody else who has been allowed, until then, to occupy a conspicuous place. Generally speaking, Galsworthy leaves us in no doubt as to the *déclenchement* of his main action, the incident that really « starts the ball rolling » ; often, too, he rivets our attention from the beginning and keeps it to the end focussed upon the central character : the Curate in « A Bit o' Love », Anthony in « Strife », Stephen More in « The Mob », and many others. In contrast with these, « The Silver Box », for all its carefully worked out development, is an example of plays where the attention of the public for some time strays from the right path. In it, the different figures of the Jones household soon begin to assume the importance previously attributed to the Barthwick family, and in the course of the drama our interest is successively shifted from one to the other set of characters, and this too transparently not to be prejudicial to the modicum of unity required from a drama of this kind. In « Windows », the number of secondary intrigues, in uncertain perspective, not infrequently confuses us : but then, this play is exceptionally ill-constructed, and badly out of focus.

These inconsistencies and digressions are defects indeed. But we are disposed to lose sight of them when, retrospectively, we consider the striking architectural qualities of Galsworthy's dramatic output. As a matter of fact, they are less apt to be resented nowadays than they might have been some thirty years ago, since to-day one would rather be tempted to cavil at the too solid structure of many of the plays : which strikes us as artificial, over-studied and over-skilful, to the detriment of the feeling of life, of whose bewildering complexity we have become conscious, and to that of the necessary interchange of psychological influences. We

have come to appreciate, more than a clear-cut story, a richer pattern with more possibilities for impressionistic exchanges.

III

The formula for the external division of a play being given, as well as the pattern according to which the internal action of a drama develops, the problem of general technique involves, for the playwright, the question of the distribution of this action into the various acts and scenes. In this, Galsworthy conscientiously obeys the fundamental rules of drama-making, without any striking innovations or markedly original devices. With him, the first act launches the plot and sets the theme well before us ; the last resolves them both, completely and adequately ; the middle acts follow their own law of movement and at the same time are well opened on what precedes and what follows, thus giving scope to the author's talent for preparation, and ensuring the indispensable continuity of the chain of causes and consequences in the whole, together with the steady increase of the emotional tension. Hence, rarely do we feel that things descend upon the characters out of the blue, or that, at any moment before the last curtain, everything has been said, leaving for the spectators nothing more to be expected and nothing to do except go home or sit it out and be bored. Alone the skill he displayed in the *déclenchement* of the action and the working out of the *dénouement*, his attitude towards the old tradition of the *scène à faire*, call for some remarks, these being fairly characteristic of Galsworthy's dramatic sense and of his thoroughness in all matters of construction.

In life, as a rule, the incident that marks the opening of a crisis and, as it were, sets the machinery in motion, being neither simple nor isolated, is not easily discernible. In drama there is no strict law regarding the point in the evolution of events at which the play must begin,

so long as the spectator is in some way, retrospectively or otherwise, put in possession of the elements that enable him to understand and experience the crisis in its entirety. The curtain may rise before the beginning of the chain of causation, or with it, or after it, when the succession of violent events has actually started. The second formula implies, of course, a more artificial choice than the other two, but is also more satisfying artistically, since it better promotes the unity which gathers the matter and the form of the play into one and the same movement. A writer may, on some occasions, strike a happy middle course, if he discovers, far back in the past, some initial factor which resulted in a delayed crisis ; this factor he presents in a prologue as a separate incident, and then does away with all visible connection between it and the main body of the play.

Galsworthy shows little preference for any one of the three methods. But whichever he chooses, we may be sure that it is suited to the nature of the plot and that he turns it to the best account. « *The Skin Game* » and « *The Mob* » are self-contained plays. There, although, latent in the protagonists, are the propensities to fierce resistance that suddenly become liberated in the open conflict, the conflict itself can obviously start only when the opposing champions are set face to face or are made to take up their confronting positions under the pressure of an external event : in « *The Mob* » excited public feeling in a country on the threshold of war is responsible for the stand taken by More against his opponents and the bitter struggle which ensues. In « *The Silver Box* » the first scene is something in the nature of a very brief prologue, staging the theft which is at the origin of the crisis ; but it does not belong to this actual crisis, which really deals with hidden motives and social conspiracies to shield a well-to-do culprit, while the poorer man and his family indiscriminately bear heavy indirect punishment. The playwright is careful to limit the prologue to a few lines, strictly centred round one single fact that bears immediate reference to what follows, and round the two figures

that are to hold the stage in succession right up to the last curtain. He thus avoids the danger of rousing our interest in situations and characters not destined to be followed up afterwards, which would prove a very disappointing process.

Some of Galsworthy's plays beginning well before the crisis involve a more or less lengthy preparation. In « The Fugitive », the disagreement between the two leading characters has really begun before the curtain rises, but the event which symbolizes this disagreement takes place after the first act. In « Joy », the whole of the first act is taken up with preparation and with the unfolding of several lines of causation, the main subject being approached from various angles which correspond with the presentation of several groups of characters. In « The Eldest Son », the crisis may be said to begin with Freda's disclosure to Bill, which occurs very near the opening. In detecting the initial fact of a play we may sometimes be led astray by mistaking the play's real purport. In « The Eldest Son » this is not only a love affair between two young people, either Bill and Freda, or between Bill and Mabel, but the momentous decision to be taken by the whole Cheshire family, consequent upon the entanglement into which the eldest son has got himself. In « The Show », a most important event has taken place before the curtain rises, but here again this event does not strictly belong to the matter of the drama, while in « Loyalties », the incident that sets the machinery of the plot in motion has occurred just before the opening scene ; the drama may be said, therefore, to begin within the crisis itself. This method is still more apparent in « Justice » and in « A Family Man ». It is well suited to studies of consequences and stories of investigation, revelation, or hesitation before an important decision.

One of the reasons why the precise moment when real action is launched is not absolutely clear in every play of Galsworthy lies in the fact that the *déclenchement* is not always single. And this, indeed, is easily explained, these dramas developing, as far as the plot is concerned,

on two planes, one physical and the other psychological. Hence, when the two do not absolutely coincide, the presence of a first *déclenchement* — that of the physical plot —, and then of a second — that of the psychological plot : and the release of the physical action generally occurs very early, as in the afore-mentioned « Silver Box ». This explains why the first act, mainly used for the launching of the action, is in most plays, a double-barrelled one, whether it is divided into two scenes or not. Since, as we have said, the physical action is usually set in motion early in the act, it follows that the exposition of previous events and the establishing of characters and situations takes up very little room ; indeed, our consciousness of the economy displayed in this connection is at times almost oppressive. In « The Eldest Son », for instance, everything is compressed into less than three pages, and we are then in possession of all the necessary indications concerning characters, situations, plots and theme, even to the point of being able to foresee what the pivot of the drama will be, namely, Freda's approaching maternity, and Bill's conflict with his father and the family traditions. In « Loyalties » we have a remarkable example of this economy, accomplished easily and naturally. In the first sixty lines an enormous amount of ground is covered ; we learn what people are staying with the Winsor's ; we are given portraits of the two principal characters, as well as a thumbnail sketch of Mabel ; also a plan of the sleeping quarters of the guests which will have its importance a little later ; a significant incident, which prepares the way for the theft, is described, and, finally, the theft itself is announced. In « Joy », on the contrary, the *déclenchement* comes rather late in the first act, and even so the setting is not wholly complete, since Lever has not yet appeared in the flesh. The act is almost entirely one of exposition and the action is hardly knit up when the curtain falls. Nevertheless, within two pages we are told much about the characters and we are in no doubt concerning the nature of the central conflict.

The functions of the last act, also, are multiple. This act has to satisfy our curiosity about the plot and our interest in the characters, to conclude the illustration of the subject and of the theme, and, in many cases, bring down the spectator from the heights of emotional tension. In other words, it must be the combined *dénouement* of every strand of physical and psychological action, and a resolution of the crisis, in which feeling regains a state of emotional repose. And so it is indeed with Galsworthy.

The turning point where the action enters its phase of resolution can be easily discerned. All the threads of the action being gathered, the last stage of the crisis then begins, at the end of which the *dénouement* is to bring to a full conclusion the double plot, physical and psychological, as well as the philosophical subject and theme. To fulfil this multiple purpose, Galsworthy often finds it convenient to use a double-barrelled *dénouement*, just as, at the commencement of the play, he used a double-barrelled opening. The method applied is practically the same in both cases. The first *dénouement* brings the action to an end, in a scene where feeling runs extremely high, where the characters hardly stop short of physical violence, where resistance often ends in sudden, complete collapse. Then, in restored calm, a shorter scene shows the return to everyday life, and contains a spoken comment, still burdened with emotion (11). This anti-climax to the last act may be a few lines only, but more often it is much longer, composing a sort of little scene in itself. As a matter of fact, in « The Mob », a full act, or aftermath, is constituted by the curtain rising, after the end of the action proper, on a monument and an inscription. This inscription is the lesson of the play. It is permissible to consider that the last scene-unit but one concludes the action, and that the following

(11) By no means a new device ; as a matter of fact, the classic pattern of tragedy, ever since the Greek tragic poets, used the scene of restored calm and comment on the theme after the act of violence.

comment or summing-up represents the resolution of the theme, so that we have in reality a double *dénouement*, one agitated and the other reposeful. In « The Eldest Son » we have something else besides a composite *dénouement* conveying successively the resolution of the physical action (main and side issues), of the characters' evolution and of the emotional theme : after the first close, there is a re-opening or branching on again of the action, leading up to a second one (12) which offers much food for meditation. This renewal of the interest at the last is greatly commended by Archer (13), but it has its dangers. The roots of the new interest are not embedded in the real plot of the drama and it incurs the risk of being hurried on to some unlikely conclusion. Another example of a composite *dénouement* comes in « Strife » ; the collapse of Anthony, pregnant with significance, is followed by the mutual gesture of the two enemies, both vanquished, yet both in spirit unconquered. And there is the third episode, all the more forceful for its quiet irony, pointing the moral of the whole drama of « Strife », which is the wastefulness of human obstinacy.

The aftermath of « The Mob » constitutes in itself an excellent episode. Its very silence, emphasizing the tragic end of a story, also suggests a telling comment on the fickleness of men and the heart-rending irony of destiny which vindicates an idea only after its apostle has been destroyed ; moreover, it is the hush and final repose of death that comes as a powerful anti-climax to the preceding scene of violence, when the curtain rises

(12) The question of the Cheshires' decision is settled. Then suddenly rises that of the Studdenham's family problem, with Freda and her father quite unexpectedly asserting themselves and holding the stage.

(13) As a matter of fact, William Archer speaks of Acts rather than Scenes : but what he tells us holds true for both : « ...he « should always consider whether it be not possible to hold some « development in reserve whereby the tension may be screwed up « again — if unexpectedly, the better. Some of the most « successful plays within my recollection have been those in « which the last act came upon us as a pleasant surprise. An « anti-climax had seemed inevitable ; and behold ! the author had « turned weakness into strength » (*Play-making*, p. 277).

for a few seconds on the memorial monument with its laudatory inscription. The epilogue of « The Fugitive », with the set of new characters introduced at the last, is less satisfying, being loosely knit up with the rest of the action. But this, after all, is only one of few instances when Galsworthy's constructive art fails to attain its usually high standard.

As regards the development of the drama, between the setting of the situation or the problem and the initial event on one hand, and the *dénouement* on the other, a tradition long prevailed in the French theatre of the nineteenth century, after Scribe, that among the strong scenes, one should stand out as most powerful of all, and that, for it, everything in the drama should be a preparation. This was the *scène à faire*, which, if the play was well constructed, or *too well* constructed, had to be expected and looked forward to from the outset.

This tradition Galsworthy does not entirely discard : but he adapts its application to his own methods of economy and to the pattern chosen for each of his dramas. For one thing, he does not allow any « big scene » so to impose itself on our imagination and sensibility as to dwarf all the rest. Also, in the carefully planned gradation of the action within each act, and from one act to the next up to the final conclusion, there is, in each of them, an occasion for a culminating phase, generally not long before the curtain ; and all these strong scenes being pitched higher and higher as the drama progresses, the most forcible one occurs with the final climax. Again, in composite plays, a telling confrontation of the protagonists is expected within each of the separate lines of action, as this draws to its close ; and the most important of such confrontations belongs to the main line of action, whose *dénouement* coincides with that of the drama as a whole. For these reasons each play may be said to include, not one strong scene, but several, among which emerges the last, which is also the most striking, bringing out, not its crucial point, but the violent phase

of the *dénouement*, the general climax before the final anti-climax. Towards it are directed all the expectancies of the public conscious of the heightening tension. This method is eminently favourable to the maintenance of unifying emotion. Likewise, it is well in keeping with the author's characteristic habits of economy.

In « Joy », however, there is a curious example of a *scène à faire* actually repeated : the discussion between mother and daughter, Joy and Molly, takes place on two separate occasions. We know that this conversation represents the nucleus of the play and we have been expecting it, but after the first violent meeting of the two women our interest is recaptured, since the following act brings it about the second time in a new form. Here the author has allowed for the psychological change which the characters have undergone between the two scenes, and whereas, in the first discussion, Joy, conscious and, indeed, over-conscious of her strength, has no doubts about her rights and power and uses menace, in the second she speaks on a note of supplication and offers to sacrifice herself.

On the other hand, some plays contain no real « big scene », either because there is no occasion for one, or because when the moment for one comes, the author avoids the call (14). In the two plays constructed round one central character hounded down by social forces and gradually crushed by accumulated disasters, namely « The Fugitive » and « Justice », we do not feel at any moment that we are working up towards a big scene. In « The Fugitive » the crucial conversation between Clare and her husband takes place in the first act and is used for the *déclenchement* of the action.

(14) The critics were divided, and Galsworthy was congratulated and blamed for having, in *Joy*, set characters who talked about nothing in particular and did not find themselves in spectacular situations : « Think, after all, of the wasted opportunities ! » Mrs Gwyn, and Lever, and Joy, and her young man, already « afforded between them a rich source of complications. Then « Mr. Gwyn could have been haled back from his outpost of « Empire into the play in time for the last act. There could have « been a succession of succulent scenes between the lot of them, « in any number of varying combinations... » (MARROT, p. 210).

In « Justice » the very strong prison scene, all in dumb show, quite arresting in its novelty, is no proper *scène à faire*, since, not marking a real progress in the development of the main plot, it constitutes, as it were, a parenthesis, entirely unprepared. In both these plays, the scene towards which we feel we are heading is the one when defeat is completed, and this is no other than the general conclusion.

Furthermore, Galsworthy may even shun the big scene after everything has for some time seemed to prepare the way for it. In « The Mob » the separation between Katherine and her husband, up to which the main line of previous action has been working, is performed, when it comes, in such a subdued key, dramatically, that it fails to rouse us to the fitting state of interest and emotion. In « The Eldest Son » we expect a big scene distinct from the *dénouement* ; in the succession of conversations between Bill and the members of the household, in the course of which his and Freda's plight is disclosed, his interview with his father is most keenly looked forward to : the very title of the play, the direction of the plot, the striking presentation of the Squire in the first scene, the oppression his domination exercises on the members of his family, everything has for a long time been pointing to a crucial, dramatic scene. And yet, when it occurs, it takes place off-stage and no big effect is directly derived from it.

We have already mentioned the qualities of economy, restraint, deliberate attention paid to all problems of construction, that are outstanding features in Galsworthy's dramatic art. Nowhere do they show more clearly than in this treatment of the *scène à faire*. The playwright has no bias for or against it, he is ready to make use of a traditional device ; but this he does in his own way. The big scene, carefully prepared, is made to coincide with the last-act climax, or, if this cannot be done, is toned down, or merely suggested through indirect approach. In this way Galsworthy avoids dividing the interest of the play between two centres of

high emotion and breaking the steady increase of tension, up to the last scene ; he also avoids overloading his dramas with spectacular action that might too clearly lay them open to the charge of artificiality and melodramatic staginess.

CHAPTER V

1. TENSION. — 2. EFFECTS. — 3. THE CURVE OF THE TENSION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION-UNITS.

I

Theme, subject, plot, situations and characters providing the substance of the drama, tension and effects may be said to represent the two principal aspects of dramatic development.

When the spectator forgets his own self, his interest being focussed on the imaginary action that takes place before his eyes, he may be moved by irresistible curiosity concerning a fateful sequence of events or concerning the destinies of the characters on behalf of whom his feelings have been enlisted ; or he may be simply carried away on a powerful wave of emotion roused in him by the playwright's fiction. Aesthetic curiosity, occupied with « how » things are going to be worked out by the author's skill, although it may pleurably titillate our intelligence and gratify our critical sense, is seldom, if ever, productive of the same breathless suspense ; it does not engage our whole personality, it is impotent in creating a state of dramatic tension.

Like all writers of fiction, Galsworthy, of course, relies on curiosity and makes it serve to bring about a state of tension in the audience. Only, he soon gets away from its cruder, more primitive form, diverting our attention, as we have already mentioned, from the external incidents themselves towards their influence on the

characters and on the psychological development of the latter. Also, at the same time as the spectator becomes more and more interested in the situations, incidents, characters, his state of suspense may be still further enhanced by various factors. He may feel himself directly concerned in the issue at stake, if the situation is invested with very wide human import : if, for instance, the powers besetting the individual can be identified with the most obscure forces of life itself that the Greeks personified in the gods and that we, nowadays, call social circumstances or human passions. There are, in Galsworthy, some extremely effective scenes of dramatic irony : for example, when we watch a character unwittingly treading on the brink of disaster and preparing his own defeat through obstinacy or ignorance. The question then, of whether he will realize his peril in time, imposes itself on us forcibly. There is added pungency, moreover, in our being momentarily in Fate's confidence ; from our Olympian position we behold the danger and feel that we should be able to avoid it.

Galsworthy's very use of strong plots is extremely favourable to the constant whetting and renewing of curiosity ; it permits also of vicarious suspense, the spectator feeling at one with the quarry pursued or relentlessly harried in a story of detection, in a scene of cross-examination or resistance to persuasion and menace ; or with the characters that are shewn watching some central figure for the sign of a decision destined to affect profoundly his own or other people's lives ; or again with those strained to tenseness in their effort to make another yield to well-meant endeavours in order to avert some threatened blow. For seldom are the bystanders on Galsworthy's stage merely disinterested lookers-on at what takes place in their midst. There are few figures of cold-blooded cynics in these dramas (1) ; the situations, at the same time as they

(1) Galsworthy certainly felt personally repelled by cynicism ; hence, maybe, his dislike of Oscar Wilde. See his *Journal*, quoted by Manner (p. 281) : « Wednesday, May 4th..... After dinner, read

involve uncertainty regarding their issue, also arouse in the fictitious observers or in those intimately concerned, very violent emotions. These the spectator, in his turn, shares by an act of projection or communion with the stage-action and thus is carried away on the crest of some controversy, of some conflict, either external — by which two different persons are pitted against each other — or internal, that is to say, corresponding with a mental or moral struggle going on in the mind of an individual. In some cases, and in these the tension often runs very high, we are conscious most acutely, not of a motive force, but of a power of inertia or of resistance manifested in the stiffening of some character submitted to continued assaults of argument.

In Galsworthy's dramas, the state of emotional tension often springs out of our pity for the unfortunate victim in the battle of life ; or we have our indignation stirred up by portraits of the hard-hearted, tyrannical or hypocritical. But there are other emotions, more deeply seated, or more complex, that are vicariously felt ; there are times when we become aware of a menace of impending Fate, something inevitable, inescapable, which awakens a feeling of awe and terror, like that overhanging the Greek tragedy. Then, naturally, there are our relations with the characters themselves, where we share in their sentiments, their anger, fear, pity, or perhaps in their hatred. Certain situations lend themselves particularly well to the provocation of this state of mind within us ; we have them in the numerous scenes of interrogation, with the desperate resistance of the accused (2) ; or again, in a conversation like the one in the third act of « Joy », where the well-meaning Colonel goes on unconsciously twisting the knife in Molly's breast (3). Our participation in the sufferings

« André Gide's *Oscar Wilde* ; a sympathetic monologue, but I « could never stomach Wilde's personality, nor his writings. »

(2) For example : « Justice », Act I, when Falder is brought to confess his forgery ; in the same play, Act II, when Ruth gives her evidence in court ; Freda questioned by Lady Cheshire, Act II of « The Eldest Son » ; in « The Show », the detective's scene with Anne, Act I, and his interrogation of Daisy, Act II, Sc. 2.

(3) « ...We all know if there were anything you *could* do, you'd

of these silent victims is all the greater from the fact that they *are* silent, that they brace themselves against their torturers. A good instance is to be found in Act II of « The Mob », where More is waited upon by his electors : throughout this scene, Katherine More stands in the background, following the discussion, but never speaking. A similar example occurs in an earlier scene, where she writes, at her husband's dictation, the letter of resignation that does violence to her most cherished convictions and sounds the death-knell of her hopes. This form of emotion may be greatly heightened, as we shall see in our study of effects in dialogue, by the manner of its expression ; especially telling are certain forms of restraint which the author employs to good advantage. Thus, the beginning of Act II of « The Silver Box », which presents Mrs. Jones occupied with details of her pitiful house-keeping, and then quietly beginning to cry as she sits down beside her sleeping husband, is invested with peculiar power.

There is a paradox in the fact that the very existence of suspense depends on our being able partly to foresee what is likely to happen and yet not having any certainty about it. Things must not come upon us, as a rule, wholly unexpectedly ; therefore, we must know something about them, but not everything. As for emotional tension, it will gain by our experiencing some apprehension or some desire about possible developments. Thus, the author should at every moment, but especially at the outset of the play, decide what we must be told and what we must be left to guess and infer for ourselves, at least momentarily. For this, Galsworthy has a very sure instinct.

Whatever may be the nature of dramatic tension and the situation that gives rise to it, there exist definite technical means for its intensification. For one thing, direct appeals to curiosity or suspense may be voiced in

« do it at once... » and again « ...D'you mean to say Joy would « not do anything on earth for her Mother and Molly for Joy ? « You don't know human nature..... » ; while all the time we know that there is one sacrifice that Molly cannot bring herself to make, even for Joy, and it is the only one that counts.

speech or conveyed in gesture. The simplest and most elementary method is the questioning of one character by another, or the explicit wording of a character's perplexity. This immediately arouses a response in us and we feel these questions to be the expression of our own uncertainty. With Galsworthy the query mark does not always appear in the text; in « The Silver Box » the sentence: « I defy anyone to find any way out of it » (4), is, of course, a disguised question, a challenge to the curiosity of the audience. Other devices, less conventional, are more often employed. It may be a forecast of some coming event, or some inevitable end that intelligence and logical reason or emotion anticipate. A character announces his own intentions, his expectations touching his own future conduct: « I am going to seek my fortune » says Clare in « The Fugitive », after having, at an earlier point, stated her conviction that her married life has become unbearable: « I expect I shall strike » (5). Like speculations may be made regarding the future of some persons by others in the play, as (again in « The Fugitive »), the remark of the servant: « One day she'll flit » (6). Such forecasts are more effective when they are at the same time the expression of misgiving or fear of consequences, as in several scenes of « Justice » (7). The announcement may be charged with an emotion stronger than mere vague apprehension; the forecast may be conveyed on a note of friendly or hostile warning, of defiance, of menace (explicit or implied), accompanied by downright suspense. Jack's cue, in « The Silver Box »: « What shall I have to swear to? » (8) and the answer of the detective are rich in

(4) Act II, Sc. 2.

(5) Act I, Clare's reply to Mrs. Fullarton.

(6) Act I, Paynter's second speech.

(7) Walter How's: « We shall regret it », Act I; and Falder's: « I feel I'll never get out as long as I live », Act III, Sc. 2. And again, Act IV, Falder's speech: « This feeling — » (he stares round him as though at something closing in) — « Its crushing me » (with sudden impersonality) « I know it is ».

(8) Act II, Sc. 2. Jack: « I say, what shall I have to swear to? » — Snow: « That's best known to yourself, sir... ».

power of suggestion. Such notes of menace resound mightily when they come at the end of a scene ; and they re-echo all the more when followed by the exit of the characters. The atmosphere of storm that Nature holds in reserve, to be unchained at the critical moment, the hidden presence of a dangerous enemy, may also be underlined in words ; a play may verge on the supernatural, with the hint of a sixth sense by which we are brought into contact with elemental things (9). Galsworthy hardly ever ventures far on this delicate ground ; and indeed he is right here. For the one time that he gives loose rein to his impulse in this direction is not a success : the dream premonition of « The Mob » comes perilously near *grand guignol*. On the contrary, we see effect enhanced by restraint and a more powerful impression achieved when the menace is conveyed in heedless words or in a spirit of levity : when, in « The Fugitive », Clare foretells her own impending fate — « That is as certain as that I shall die » (10) ; or when the song is sung within her hearing : « This day a stag must die » (11) ; or when a child, with the cruelty of ignorance, reminds her elders of the sword of Damocles that overhangs them (12).

Words are not always necessary on the stage, where gestures and scenery sometimes supply the place of spoken dialogue. In the setting of an act there may be significant details very revealing for those who know how to interpret them. The curtained door, in the first act of « The Fugitive », the bottle of poison later on in the same play, are undisguised clues. A number of unsensational incidents in the action may embody an important symbol : the girl's hair being « up » in

(9) For instance, the prophesy of a thunder storm, repeated by Peachey in Act II of « Joy » ; this storm is to coincide with great convulsions in the lives of the characters.

(10) Act III, Sc. 2.

(11) See « The Fugitive », Act III, Sc. 2, and Act IV.

(12) A good example of truth thus issuing out of the mouths of babes and sucklings occurs in « The Mob », in the remark with which Olive sums up the terrible situation of her parents and foreshadows impending ruin : « It's a pity we're not on the same side as Daddy » (Act II).

« Joy » marks her passage from childhood to womanhood. The clue may also be contained in a contrast or a parallel : in « The Eldest Son », the story of the village girl is soon felt to have great meaning. Or it may be conveyed in a tableau, an attitude, a gesture : the motionlessness of Freda in the centre of the opening picture, while her social betters only pass before her, quickly indicates the waiting-maid as one of the leading figures in the coming drama.

The playwright's skill in imparting the right dose of information, handling the situations and timing the action, plays the greatest part in bringing an audience to the desirable state of tension. Galsworthy, with sure dramatic instinct, seems at every moment to know exactly what we must be told, what we must be left to guess and infer for ourselves, how to whet our curiosity by delaying the happenings we are interested in, how to make us look forward with fear or with desire to possible developments. For these he uses different devices, from the very outset in his plays. He is partial to raising his curtain on an empty stage, steeped in silence and expectation of some important entrance. Of course, when this is done, it would be extremely dangerous to disappoint the tense expectation thus created by fobbing us off with the entrance of some insignificant person : the playwright does not make this mistake (13). When the curtain rises on a peopled stage, it is frequent to see a group discussing other important characters that are kept in reserve (14). This already excites our interest, all the more so if the conversation is coloured with personal feeling, so that we ourselves come to be prejudiced for or against the

(13) In « The Pigeon », for example, Wellwyn and Ann, with Canon Bertley, enter immediately after the curtain has risen on the empty stage : in « The Silver Box », the first entrance is Jack's ; in « The Show », Anne enters as soon as the curtain has gone up.

(14) In « Joy », Molly and her daughter are immediately spoken of. In « Strife », the strikers and their unhappy situation are mentioned after the first half-a-dozen words. The opening dialogue in « The Fugitive » is all about Clare. In « Loyalties », De Levis and Dancy are discussed in the conversation between Winsor and his wife which opens the play.

people we have not yet seen ; or if there is a hint of some paradoxical or unusual situation, as there is in « *The Fugitive* » and to a greater extent in « *The Silver Box* », where our interest is at once solicited by the contrast between Jack Barthwick's situation and that of the man Jones, as revealed in their drunken utterances : Jack is the son of a Liberal M.P., Jones the husband of the same M.P.'s charwoman. Furthermore, once our interest is awakened, Galsworthy does not make the mistake of keeping us waiting too long, and the looked-for entrance follows, as a rule, quickly. If, however, it fails to do so, interest is not allowed to flag. The first act of « *Joy* » does not lose any of its power from the fact that Molly, who has been mentioned in the first sentence of the play and has been the centre of all conversations on the stage, only appears in the flesh in the second half of the act, and Lever at its very end.

Sometimes, the action itself, when already in full swing, is deliberately interrupted so that curiosity is momentarily increased by disappointment. Later on in the present chapter we shall have to study a side of this question when dealing with the alternation of strong and weak scenes. After a new development has been announced, or when everything seems to point to it more or less plainly, it is frequent, the curtain having been dropped, that the beginning of the following scene does not fulfil our expectation. In « *The Silver Box* » (Act I, Sc. II), after Marlow has said : « The master will have to be told », the opening of the next scene does not resume the action where it was left. After Scene I of the same play, a great deal of business is gone through and time spent before the theft is at last discovered, when we feel that the vital point in the development of the plot is being reached. In « *The Mob* », the story of the More family is temporarily abandoned for a picture of the difficulties of the reformer in his relations with the crowd (15).

(15) The divergence of opinion between Stephen More and his wife is shewn in Acts I and II, but does not monopolize the attention ; the main theme predominates. In Act III, the first

One of the methods often used to postpone the materialization of half-expected occurrences, consists in separating the spectator from the development of the main plot by bringing forward on the stage some incidents belonging to a less essential line of action, or by carrying forward, alternately, two equally important sequences of events : in « The Mob », the great collective body of the crowd, — a most important character —, appears only twice in physical intervention ; but its presence is all the time felt, dominating the whole drama. Sometimes, even, the separation is not only momentary ; the playwright maintains tension at a high pitch by frustrating our expectations altogether, by keeping, as it were, our imagination for a long while in a state of violent excitement, although it may mean the deliberate sacrificing of a *scène à faire*. Then, while some piece of secondary business goes on before our eyes, we are reminded that weighty matters are taking place unseen. Sardou applied the same device in another form in « Fedora » : the door of the room where Vladimir lies on his death-bed opens only now and then upon the front scene where the rest of the action is in progress, so that we have but glimpses of the greater tragedy being enacted elsewhere (16). With this we can compare the scene of « Strife », where deliberations of great moment are being conducted, in a room apart, from which we only get fragmentary echoes (17). The event off-stage was a feature of the Greek tragedy, but for different reasons. That scenes of violence

scene deals with More's fight as a reformer, while the second is the big scene of rupture with his wife. Act IV takes up the main theme again ; towards the end, the discussion with Katherine is momentarily resumed, to be closed finally before the ultimate climax of the drama.

(16) As another example of a big scene rightly placed off-stage, William Archer (*Play-making*, p. 197) also quotes the interview between Robert and the Nurse, in François de Curel's « Les Fossiles ».

(17) The scene is laid in the Underwoods' drawing-room, from which double doors lead to the dining-room where the directors' meeting is being held. From time to time, as these doors open and shut upon various persons passing in and out, noise of angry discussion is heard, or some comment is made by one of the characters upon what is taking place within.

should only be brought second-hand to the audience, by the medium of a messenger, was made necessary by the sculptural quality of the ancient drama. The reason with Galsworthy, as with Sardou, lies elsewhere ; he is not squeamish in the matter of submitting his audience to physical shocks by direct presentation of violence in words and gestures ; or even of picturing death itself (18). When he chooses to remove those from our eyes, he does it, as Ibsen did, for the sake of tension.

Nor are postponement or suppression confined to the development of an event ; an explanation or an important piece of information may be withheld and then, generally speaking, the delay has to be satisfactorily accounted for ; and Galsworthy displays ingenuity in so doing, while preserving verisimilitude. The cause may lie in a natural psychological trait, having for its result the victim's resistance to pressure as he is relentlessly driven to avowal (19) ; or in some peculiarity of temperament : witness Heythorp's heavy silences (« Old English »), and Anthony's laconicism (« Strife »). Or again, it may be some external factor, in the shape of those interruptions so common in ordinary life, when brilliant details are always cropping up to distract us from some vital purpose : in « Joy », Mrs. Hope's tea-table arrangements interfere continually to prevent the Colonel's making up his mind, and his perseverance in spite of them makes us suspect that his wife is the unconscious instrument of Fate, which delights in giving him one warning after another to check him upon his dangerous way ; while his persistence in pursuing his own disaster renders him at once ridiculous and pathetic (20). At other times, some perfectly reasonable

(18) In « Justice », Falder's body is brought on to the stage (Act IV), though it is kept in the background ; in « The Fugitive », Clare's suicide, Act IV, takes place before our eyes, as does that of Heythorp in « Old English », Act III, Sc. 2. Still more violent is the second scene of Act II, of « The Forest », where Herrick and Strood, after a fierce fight with the natives, are killed on the stage.

(19) As when Glor is interrogated by old Hornblower (« The Skin Game », Act II, Sc. 2), or Jack by his father (« The Silver Box », Act I, Sc. 3), or in the Tramp's first interview with Sir Charles, in Act I of « Exiled ».

(20) « Joy », Act II.

explanation is forthcoming for the postponement of a revelation : a character may choose to wait until the information can be given in confidence, when the stage is cleared of bystanders (21). All this keeps our curiosity on the alert and it is further enhanced by the curiosity of the characters themselves, or their emotions.

There exists, among the traditions of the drama, a certain device calculated to maintain this sense of vicarious suspense in the spectator. A well-known example is the screen scene in « *The School for Scandal* » (22). Here, the audience is concerned much less with the flow of action perceptible by the senses, than with what he supposes to be going on in the mind of the concealed listener ; and the state of tension is further heightened by the knowledge that at any moment the disclosure of this hidden presence is bound to come about and cause unpredictable complications. Of this Galsworthy contrives ingenious variations : we have one in a scene of « *A Bit o' Love* », where a child witnesses the interview between Strangways and his wife (23). Elsewhere, the situation is renewed by the existence of someone asleep in the room where a conversation is being carried on. Howbeit, the playwright does not fall into the error of using this device, somewhat artificial and certainly threadbare, as the pivot of the play or of prolonging indefinitely the state of suspense it creates (24). Disclosure of such a hidden presence occurs

(21) For example, in « *Loyalties* », the General waits till he is alone with Winsor to reveal the tell-tale detail of Dancy's wet sleeve (Act I. Sc. 2) ; Winsor does the same when imparting the information to Colford (Act II). That Freda should choose a moment when Bill is alone to tell him her secret (« *The Eldest Son* », Act I, Sc. 2), is only natural.

(22) See on this question, William ARCHER's : « *Play-making* », pp. 126-131.

(23) Act I. There is another manipulation of the same device in Act III, Sc. 2 of « *Loyalties* » : Dancy is waiting in an adjoining room while his friends are discussing his guilt with Mr. Twisden ; how much he overhears of their conversation we cannot be sure — and this increases the tension — but Colford's reference to Mabel is made after Dancy, unseen, has opened the door behind the speakers.

(24) In « *The Silver Box* », Act I, Sc. 2, Jack is asleep on the divan while Wheeler and Mrs Jones are talking ; this serves to heighten the tension, but in reality has no bearing on the plot,

early, and we are spared the devastating consequences which ensue from eavesdropping by the villain of melodrama.

Finally Galsworthy, further managing to increase tension after we have become familiar with all the protagonists of the play, creates suspense and little by little relieves it by the various entrances and exits within a scene, and by a judicious gradation in the interventions of the different characters which makes us realize that the situation is working up towards a towering climax. This occurs in cross-examination and trial scenes, in « Justice » (25), in particular, where the quality of the witnesses called up by the counsel for the defence follows a very good theatrical progression to the value of which we are fully alive : there is first of all Cokeson, well-meaning, but slightly comic, then Ruth, with her drab history of an unhappy marriage, and, finally, the wretched Falder himself. Such a method, applied in these circumstances, gains enormously from the fact that it is divested of all appearance of artificiality, being only the clever utilization in play-writing of the genuinely dramatic quality that appertains to certain episodes of social life itself, in its more formal aspects.

All these devices are well chosen to combine the two forms of tension, resting as they do on crude curiosity and on other emotions felt by the spectator on his own behalf or in sympathy with the characters. The hidden presence in the wings, or the existence in another walk of life, of some person whose influence, we feel in advance, is going to prove decisive, cannot but awaken a sense of pervading menace, that secret apprehensiveness to which most of us only too readily fall a prey. Thus, although Barthwick, in « The Silver Box », is absent from the stage, we know that he still remains the deciding factor in the life of the Joneses. In « The Fugitive », the references to a man waiting on the stairs — the agent of Clare's persecutors who tracks the runaway wife —, in « Loyalties », the knowledge that

the police are waiting on the door-step, that they have come to make an arrest (26), all this takes hold of our frightened imaginations while our eyes are watching the business that is being transacted on the stage. Sometimes the threat comes from an embodiment much mightier and more mysterious : the Mob, for instance, whose vast presence we feel encompassing the More household, or moving under Lord Arthur's windows in « *The Foundations* ». Or again, when there seems to cling, about Nature herself, a brooding menace of thunder and storm which may be the foreshadowing of a great convulsion by which the lives of puny mortals will be rudely shaken or uprooted (27).

II

An effect, or shock to the nerves may be due to sudden heightening, realization or resolution of tension ; it may even occur in the shape of a powerful appeal to emotion and curiosity, or of an abrupt, much-needed relief from the latter, or of surprise pure and simple.

Surprise may be created by a sudden occurrence, by entrances of new characters upon the stage, by a revelation, be it the announcement of news or of unlooked-for decisions. The difficulty, of course, is to reconcile such shocks with the state of expectation that, for the sake of suspense and curiosity, has to precede them. Galsworthy has both sufficient invention to provide sharp turnings in the current of his action, and sufficient skill to reconcile these two apparently opposing elements. He manages to make the spectator participate in the surprise of a character, as before he made him participate in his expectancy. For, although he respects his own finger-posts and fulfils the anticipations to which these have given rise, he finds ways of doing so which we had not foreseen. That is to say that surprise will be connected, as was suspense, with the

(26) Act III, Sc. 3.

(27) « *Joy* », Act. II. See also note 9, above.

question of the « how » as well as of the « what ». An example of various kinds of surprise following one another is found in the scene between Jones and his wife, in the second act of « The Silver Box » ; the former's decision to go to Canada is absolutely new to us and completely unexpected. But the other surprises are of a different quality : we know for sure that it is necessary for the play that the theft committed by Jones should come out and become known to his wife, but the discovery is managed by stages and in such ways that on each occasion it gives us the required shock, made up at the same time of our own reaction to details unforeseen, of our participation in the poor woman's consternation, and of appreciation of how it is all contrived. Another subtle and at once very lifelike form of this alliance between expectation and surprise is the effect produced by the entrance of a character of whom someone has been speaking — an exemplification of what is meant by « talking of angels » (28).

Surprise occurring among more important elements of the plot may take the form of peripeties and *coups de théâtre*. Although the word « peripety », defined by William Archer as « a turning of the tables » (29), has come to be applied indifferently to any changes for the better or for the worse in the progress of a drama, it would seem that we appreciate such changes all the more as they retain, from the Greek *peripeteia*, a mark of the direct intervention of Fate, with all its caprices and ironies, in human affairs. Galsworthy knows how to avoid crudeness by dealing mainly in psychological peripeties which come about as subtle manifestations of poetic justice, well enough disguised not to smack of artificiality. Many are the instances in his plays where the humble are exalted and the proud brought low, but we have already seen that these victories and

(28) Clare's unexpected arrival at Malise's rooms (« The Fugitive », Act III, Sc. 1), just after Huntingdon's message to her ; Cloe's entrance, after Jill and Hillerist have been discussing her. (« The Skin Game », Act III, Sc. 2).

(29) See WILLIAM ARCHER : *Play-making*, chap. XIV : The Peripety.

defeats are in the main moral and sometimes contradicted by material appearances. The humiliation of the proud is often shown by the necessity for eating one's words, a rather unexpected outcome of previous preparation. The greater the arrogance, the more profound is the abasement that ensues. We have typical examples in « The Eldest Son » and in « The Silver Box » : Sir William Cheshire, in the former play, takes a high stand and insists on morality being upheld, when his under-keeper is concerned ; but his arguments turn against him when his own son is in question ; Barthwick and his wife, in « The Silver Box », proclaim themselves inflexible about adhering to principles and never tampering with truth, but in defence of their ne'er-do-weel of a son are prepared to throw principles overboard and distort facts. In « The Fugitive », we have an instance of a finely ironical paradox : it occurs in the second act, where Clare has an encounter with her husband's family ; their mission is to show her error of her ways and, instead, she ends by winning over at least one of them to her side.

As well as the peripety, the *coup de théâtre*, in Galsworthy is generally a swift psychological change, a sudden revulsion of feeling. In the old melodramas, the whole plot sometimes hinged on some such abrupt changes of front, which nothing at all could explain and which might just as well have happened in the first act as in the last. Galsworthy does not give undue importance to these sudden effects. At the same time, he does not always account for them satisfactorily ; they are not always in character. Strangway's fit of violence, in the first scene of Act II in « A Bit o' Love », when he hurls his drunken tormentor through a window, may seem slightly out of keeping with the rest of his personality as previously revealed, even allowing for the great provocation to which he is subjected. In « The Fugitive », Clare's changed sentiments towards Malise (Act III, Scene I), remain unexplained. But these, on the whole, are exceptional weaknesses ; as a rule, the psychological *coups de théâtre* are justified by the

circumstances that bring them about. The unexpected gesture of mutual esteem and almost of alliance between Robertls and Anthony, in the last act of « Strife », although perhaps a little spectacular, accords with the temperaments of the two men, equally ready to recognize each other's integrity in face of the desertion of their followers. In the short scene with Rose Taylor, in « The Eldest Son », we have a thoroughly natural change of attitude. Rose is the village siren with whom the under-keeper has had an entanglement. She sticks to it that Dunning shall marry her, while Lady Cheshire points out the dangers of marriage without affection. Rose maintains an obstinate sullenness, until, softened by Lady Cheshire's offer of friendship, she breaks out with : « I'm not so hard, really. I only want him to do « what's right by me. » This is a master touch, showing the girl's better nature piercing through her plate-armour of stolidity. Freda's more scenic *volte face* at the end of the same play is also quite comprehensible under the sting of humiliation. The *coup de théâtre* achieved in « The Mob », with More's « Thank God ! », when he hears of the English victory, is also quite logical and in keeping with the speaker's state of mind : More has been, all along, opposing his Government over the war question, which induces his enemies to believe, quite erroneously, that he is a bad patriot and would rejoice over a defeat ; whereas, of course, More is passionately devoted to his country. At the same time, we cannot help thinking that this little incident rather pleases the author, who undoubtedly feels that he has risen there to great psychological heights.

In feminine and in collective characters changes of mood are frequent ; Galsworthy shares the conventional view of the fickleness of the crowd. To women he also attributes a variableness which is turned to good dramatic account. An excellent effect is obtained in « Strife », with the successive psychological *coups de*

théâtre in the first scene of the second act : the feelings of the women as individuals undergo a swift alteration as soon as they identify themselves with the group to which they belong, and their attitude changes yet again whenever solidarity between husband and wife is threatened.

Even when chance intervenes in Galsworthy's dramas — as it does in life — it is not allowed to do so obtrusively, in the shape of unbelievable coincidences destined to change the course of the action altogether ; the purely external incidents having no decisive influence, the conduct of the characters is governed mainly by their psychology and can thus be all the more easily foreshadowed. The chance happenings which do occur — they are not frequent — are managed without ostentation and so as to ensure the right word at the right moment : the death of Mrs. Roberts, in « *Strife* », is not wholly unexpected (31) ; it takes place at the most critical point of the dramatic development, at the time when it is provocative of the greatest effect, and after some degree of expectation concerning such a possibility has been one among several factors of tension. In this use of coincidences, a clever solution is therefore discovered to satisfy the exigencies of verisimilitude and the demands of dramatic composition.

Galsworthy displays equal skill in the grouping of the *coups de théâtre*. Not infrequently they follow quickly upon the heels of one another. As they gather force, they help in the creation of suspense : in the first act of « *The Mob* », More has announced his intention of delivering an unpopular speech ; then comes the declaration of war, occurring sooner than he foresaw, — a first surprise —, and just when it seems probable that he will, in consequence of this, abandon his idea, a second surprise is produced by the announcement that despite the altered circumstances the speech has been made.

(31) Act II, Sc. 2. We know all along that she is ailing and that anxiety and privations are telling upon her. When her death comes it is one more blow for Roberts, and an added reason for his enemies, on both sides, to accuse him of wrongheadedness.

Surprise, single or accumulated, is often instrumental in leading up to the act or scene climax. Again to refer to « *The Mob* », the delegation's altered attitude (Act II), on hearing what is happening in the street, brings down the curtain on a fairly good, though somewhat stagey effect ; and at the end of the last act of « *The Eldest Son* » a double surprise is achieved in the two successive climaxes — the decision of the Cheshire family not to recognize Bill's marriage, followed by the unlooked-for reaction of Freda and her father.

There is a most elementary form of effect, namely, that of an acute physical shock to the nerves, coupled with surprise. Galsworthy knew its value and used it deliberately, although with moderation. His theory was, to use his own words, « that a physical thrill is all that « really counts in a play » (32). The remark was made in connection with the incident of the child crying outside the Barthwicks' window in Scene II, Act II, of « *The Silver Box* ». Here Galsworthy gets every inch of value out of his effect since this small incident underlines all that has gone before, and all that is yet to come, better than a score of speeches could possibly do, while its poignancy is unrivalled. A similar physical thrill may be accomplished by the sudden breaking of ominous quiet or silence : such an effect is well handled in the opening scene of « *The Silver Box* ». There is another instance in « *The Mob* », Act II, where the military band is suddenly heard outside the windows, breaking in upon the comparative quiet of the discussion that has been proceeding. At the same time, Galsworthy was careful to avoid, in one play, repetitions of major physical effects : it was for this reason that, in « *Strife* », he dismissed the idea of Anthony having a stroke at the end of the play. Coming on the top of Mrs Roberts's death, this would have meant two physical collapses in the same drama (33).

Considering the predominance of the purely psycholog-

(32) Letter to Edward Garnett, March 10th, 1906 (MARROT, p. 190).

(33) See MARROT, p. 241. Letter to Edward Garnett, undated.

ical element in these dramas, the scenes of physical violence are, nevertheless, surprisingly numerous. They are sometimes extremely powerful : the crowd-scenes in « The Mob » are actually painful to the spectator, who feels that, apart from their brutality, they are an assault upon our common human dignity ; he finds himself debased by the cowardly attack from the many upon the one. Violence does not always culminate in bodily strife and the exchange of blows. To a lesser degree, vigorous language, insults, oaths, go far in producing the same sort of shock. The spectacle of death is, of course, carrying this to its highest power. Galsworthy does not indulge in stories of murder, but suicide or fatal issues figure throughout his plays (34). We might consider that all these are rather cheap modes of appealing to the emotion of the audience, were they not, like everything else in the theatre of Galsworthy, closely bound up with the study of human psychology, or if, underlying them, there were not divined the tragic presence of passions and of social forces.

When an effect is only the apex of a state of tension suddenly arrived at and released, it may, like tension itself (from which it cannot be dissociated), be felt by the spectator either directly or on behalf of the persons on the stage. Galsworthy often uses the direct appeal to our personal emotion, though very seldom to one already latent in most of us and independent of the excitement of the drama : in « The Mob », he relies on patriotism for some of his effects, but such procedure is not the rule, and more generally it is what actually goes on upon the stage that is not only the stimulus to, but the very occasion for the high pitch of feeling aroused. The pathetic note sometimes lacks the required vigour : the revelation that Clare, in « The Fugitive », to earn her living has to sell gloves in a shop certainly does not open the floodgates of our tears. Mrs Jones, in « The Silver Box », is, on the contrary, genuinely touching. The reason for this unevenness is probably that before our

(34) See above Chapter II, II : The melodramatic plots,

compassion can be awakened, the author must make sure that he has beforehand enlisted our sympathies on behalf of the character concerned. Galsworthy is at his best when expounding the tragedy of the humble and the weak, or of the lonely, or when the pathos of a situation is one with that of the human condition at large. There is something extremely moving in the helplessness of the relatives of the departing soldiers in « *The Mob* », and in the futility of their entreaties, addressed by turns to one and the other, to take care of their particular man (35).

And yet, as a rule, the appeals to more violent feelings obtain a more powerful response ; our indignation seethes within us at the sight of cowardly bullying, or of the strong deliberately taking advantage of the best impulses of the weak, of cynicism, of caddishness, whether deliberate or unconscious. We are personally revolted by the magistrate's complacency towards Jack's misdoings, in the trial scene of « *The Silver Box* », the amused tolerance with which he accepts the fact that young Barthwick should have had too much champagne, contrasting with the severity of his dealings with Jones (36). A wave of anger at Sir William sweeps over us, in « *The Eldest Son* », when he hints to his wife that she should manoeuvre Freda into sacrificing herself. His remark : « She's soft. She'll never hold out against you » (Act III), discloses something in the nature of the man from which we recoil. Galsworthy obviously realizes that the human heart is so made that hostile emotions have a stronger hold upon it than sympathy !

While effects of this sort act upon us through no projection of ourselves into the alien personality on the stage, it may happen, on the other hand, that we are shaken by the repercussion of a blow received by one

(35) Hubert's promise to look after Nurse Wreford's son ; and her speech : « ...Ah ! Mr. Hubert, now do 'ee take care, you and « him's so rash » (Act I) ; and Act II : Helen (speaking of her husband) : « Take care of him, Wreford » ; and, later, Katherine to Wreford : « Now take care of my brother and yourself... ».

(36) Act III.

of the characters. We share Mrs. Barthwick's horror, in « The Silver Box », at the disclosure of her son's misdoings ; but such an effect is only complete if it has been prepared by our participation in a previous state of vicarious tension, after which the effect comes as a climax or an indispensable revulsion. Then quick *tempo* is almost always essential. Galsworthy knows how to carry us away by the movement of a quarrel, ending in confusion, with all the worst passions let loose. Or, instead of an external conflict, we may have a single individual working himself up to a state of frenzy. Then, as in the famous third scene of the second act of « Justice », the shock comes to an audience well prepared to feel it to the utmost, having been carried along with the hero on the stage in a tempest of passion.

A sudden explosion in words or gestures, after a period of tense, deceptive calm, may be exceedingly powerful, the effect being reinforced by surprise when we realize all that has, until then, been held in check. Besides, the very struggle of the character against giving rein to his feelings is calculated to rouse our sympathy and we are sensible also that the abrupt reaction after difficult self-control is in conformity with psychological truth. All these elements converge in our appreciation of Malise's outburst, in « The Fugitive », at the end of the first scene of Act III ; it is akin to the effect produced by the sudden collapse of Jones, in « The Silver Box », or Falder, in « Justice », after long resistance to the pressure of hostile interrogation (37).

The contrary method is the swift revelation of the degree to which the cold flame of long-nurtured hatred has secretly been working itself up ; this generally comes in an apparently quiet utterance, tense with suppressed passion, or perhaps in the grating sound of black laughter. The realization of class hatred in Roberts (« Strife »), that of the Fugitive's loathing for her husband, are peak effects in spite, or because of, their unspectacular mode of expression (38). A similar

(37) « The Silver Box », Act III ; and « Justice », Act I.

contrast is given in the unshakable resistance of a strong character, whose cryptic negation repeatedly opposes itself to eloquent efforts of persuasion, thus cheating all expectation, our own included, of a change of front (39). But again, with this question of the possibilities of wording for enhancing the power of an emotional effect, we approach another aspect of technique which will be more fully treated elsewhere. Let it simply be said at this juncture that Galsworthy, although he may express keen emotion in vigorous speech or gesture, does not weaken his effects by over-statement or exaggerated explicitness, and that there is practically no climax of words in his dramas that is not intimately connected with climax in genuine feeling ; that he knows the full value of brevity and under-statement which leaves much to our imagination and by contrast makes the comparatively rare explosions more forcible ; that he achieves power with the help of restraint, or by giving the impression that words, insufficient as they are, have been wrung out of an inarticulate character in spite of himself and contrarily to his natural habit ; that with him, a gesture not completed, a sentence ridiculously inadequate, only enhance an effect by emphasizing the underlying passion.

Like the effects of surprise, and indeed to a greater degree, those of emotion hardly ever come singly. They are manifested in a gradation of violent moods, with all the elements of conflict that they contain : typical examples are the strikers' meeting in « Strife » and the close of the auction sale in « The Skin Game » (40). Very frequently the acceleration of the *tempo*, and the gradation of these effects, combine together to carry the sensation of tension to its highest pitch. But not only so. Many of the effects are not merely assembled in juxtaposition. They complete each other naturally and, as in life itself, the effect is coupled with a counter-

(38) « Strife », Act II, Sc. I : Roberts's dialogue with Enid.
« The Fugitive » : Clare's discussion with George in the last part of Act I.

(39) The character of old Anthony in « Strife ».

(40) Act II, Sc. I.

effect, the climax with an anti-climax, where calm and reason follow close on the heels of excitement, or even utter collapse supervenes as the very outcome of overwhelming violence. An interesting form of the grouping of effects, which may be defined as a false climax, is one where the first powerful effect is deliberately made to miss fire in its consequences, and is immediately followed by an unexpected change and complete turning of the action. Of such, one of the most remarkable is the suicide which does not come off, in « A Bit o' Love » (41). Of the comic effects, frequently used too, when Galsworthy feels the audience badly needs complete relaxation after a climax to great tension, we shall speak in a later chapter.

III

If the plays of Galsworthy are demonstrated by the foregoing analysis to be a connected sequence of actions provoking a state of tension and of powerful shocks to the sensibilities of the spectator, further examination shows that these, far from being sprinkled about, haphazard, throughout the whole course of a drama, are, on the contrary, well in position and carefully graded. To use William Archer's terms (42), plays where a few shocks only appear as final climaxes to acts, prepared by an unbroken development, are worked out according to a *legato* movement, whilst the others, where strong effects and moments of very high tension more or less regularly alternate with moments of repose, obey a *staccato* movement. The latter, Galsworthy distinctly favours: within each act and each scene, each of the several action-units and phases of the dialogue develops round one or several effects.

(41) Act III, Sc. 2. We see Strangways preparing the noose and placing it round his neck; his suicide seems inevitable. But the incident of the frightened child interrupts him and in soothing her, his mood changes.

(42) See William ARCHER, *Play-making*, p. 98: « The question « whether a legato or a staccato opening is more desirable... ».

The connected succession of words and gestures surrounding an effect or a peak-moment of the tension must be useful for their preparation, or arise as their natural consequence, or, again, provide a needed relief from intense emotion. So that the most elementary pattern of the action-unit would comprise two phases, one ascending, one descending, according to the movement of the tension, and separated from each other by a strong climax or nervous shock. Even the descending phase may be extremely quick, being then represented by a short counter-effect. This is what happens, for instance, in a sudden collapse following violence. But matters are not so simple with Galsworthy. This dramatist distributes his effects according to many different formulæ, so that the movement of his action-unit may be represented by varying curves.

He does not show any definite preference for either weak or strong beginnings ; that is to say, he attacks on a note either of strong emotion and suspense, or of repose. The only law that we seem to discover in his work is that when a scene-element has been closed by a particularly strong effect, the author prefers to reopen the action on a quiet note. And rather than choosing between the strong and the weak openings, he seems to favour a clever combination of the two that presents many advantages. He strikes a powerful note, almost from the very first, then begins anew with the steady, upward movement from a much lower level. The advantage of this composite beginning is obvious. With the initial strong attack — very often a question, or a graphic summing-up of a situation in one telling sentence — he arrests once for all the attention of the audience, which he directs towards what is to come ; then, with the immediate reopening, he provides for himself an opportunity of working up an effect by slow increase of emotion and of suspense. This second effect is placed near the end, sometimes at the very end of the scene-unit. For, unlike the acts themselves, the divisions and sub-divisions of the acts may close on a momentary climax consisting of a high-pitched note,

word or gesture ; although it frequently happens that even in a scene-unit, an anti-climax occurs — also extremely brief —, so that the author having led us through calm to violence, takes us back into tranquillity again, thus completing the movement most harmoniously.

A very interesting design occurs in several cases ; used sparingly it is most effective. It is the presentation, not of a worked-up but of a worked-down scene-unit, starting *fortissimo* and gradually diminishing. The most striking example of this occurs in « Joy », Act III: Molly, finding Peachey alone, addresses her with a heartrending protest and an accusation of tormenting her ; then, through several stages, eventually reaches a state of resignation. Here Galsworthy shows that he knows how to combine the exigencies of psychology and of the drama. We shall find, as a rule, that the very movement of the scene-unit is determined by, or anyhow perfectly suits, the sort of emotion that is its momentary theme. In the example just quoted, the psychological theme is wretchedness, which state of mind is often relieved when it can find an outlet in speech ; whereas irritation, on the contrary, more often than not increases and works itself up with words.

Considered as a mere succession of incidents, the act, (and the play as a whole) therefore may be seen as an irregular succession of many moments of low tension and of effects, of repose and of tense emotion ; the curve representing their development would reveal a number of crests, unevenly separated by more or less rapid falls. But, considered as a structural sequence of dramatic phases, that is to say, if we assimilate strong scenes and weak scenes in the act to the points of high and of low tension (to the effects, and to the moments of repose) in the scene, the design of the act development is, roughly speaking, the same as that of the action-unit.

In the first act Galsworthy sometimes raises his curtain on a strong first scene (above all when that scene forms a sort of prologue, as it does in « The Silver Box » and « Escape ») ; sometimes, also, he opens the action quietly and works it up steadily ; but most frequently

he begins the act by striking the keynote and quickly setting the problem, together with the essentials of the situation ; then, close upon this, he reopens the action with a separate second scene, pitched very low, and gradually leading into more exposition and into the thick of the story. The real exposition thus starts only after our interest has been secured by means of the powerful initial scene, which latter is occasionally a short, arresting *tableau*. In « The Show » the opening is rather paradoxical, a violent action having taken place just before the rise of the curtain. This may have been a mistake recognized by Galsworthy himself, as he made it responsible (in conjunction with the heat of the day when the first performance of the play was given) for its poor reception by the public (43) ; he said that the audience could not be expected, in such a climate, to remain in a very high state of tension. The question is rather whether Galsworthy himself was able to maintain the high level of the initial attack, and not to disappoint his audience.

As a rule, Galsworthy is not fond of dropping the final curtain on a full close, either a violent note or a spectacular *tableau*. Very deep feeling may be expressed at the last, but the manner of it is restrained, so that the impression of an artificial climax, a thought-out *mot de situation* or elaborate grouping of characters is avoided. This, indeed, is true to life, where crises generally do not stop short on a sensational event, but dwindle away until they are absorbed again into the humdrum everyday routine. And this is the sort of ending preferred by Galsworthy ; that is to say, one which is not a climax, but an anti-climax, bringing about a return to calm after a violent scene or a scene ending on a strong emotional chord.

This anti-climax to the last act may be a few lines only, but more often it is much longer, composing a sort of little scene in itself, and as a matter of fact, in « The

(43) See Letter to André Chevrillon, July 18th, 1925 (MARROT, p. 563) : « But since it starts with the morning after a suicide, « it's rather grim for July... ».

Mob », as has already been pointed out, a full act or aftermath is constituted by the curtain rising, after the end of the action proper, on the monument erected to the hero. A happy middle course has here been struck between the full, violent close, and a tame, slightly disappointing ending ; for the anti-climax, in spite of its quietness, is nevertheless pregnant with deep-lying significance and restrained pathos. So, again, is the anti-climax in « Strife », not spectacular, but of crushing force by reason of the poignant irony it expresses ; while in the same play, the culminating scene that just precedes it, that is, the *tableau* of the two enemies saluting each other, united as it were by the fundamental similarity of their temperaments and their isolation in a world of compromise, is at once restrained and of great emotional power. « The Eldest Son » with its double-barrelled *dénouement* involves two separate climaxes (the first and stronger climax, then the branching again of the action leading up to a second close that offers much food for meditation).

In the beginning and the end of the middle acts, Galsworthy applies, as a whole, the same principles as in the beginning of the first and in the end of the last acts, although it often happens that the openings of the middle acts are tamer than those of the first. Our interest having already been aroused, it is not essential to strike from the outset a very loud note. And the end may include a much shorter anti-climax than that which immediately precedes the ultimate curtain. Besides, although Galsworthy rarely uses an unmitigated full close at the conclusion of his plays, he sometimes uses a strong climax at the end of an act : in « The Mob », the third act terminates with a cry of horror and moral revolt, after More realizes his wife's attempt to use a particularly debasing form of blackmail ; and in « The Fugitive » we have a violent finale to the first scene of Act III (44).

(44) Clare has just arrived at Malise's rooms. He learns that two men have shadowed her to his quarters and are outside on the stairs. He flings open the door and they are discovered listening : then Malise (with strange, almost noiseless ferocity) : « You've « run her to earth ; your job's done. Kennel up, hounds ! »

In order that no effect shall be wasted, Galsworthy enables the spectator to measure, so to speak, the degree of emotion or suspense which he experiences, by contriving, in the course of each act, a judicious alternation of contrasting scenes, slow and quick, strong and weak : scenes of violent action and scenes of relief and repose. In this way, lassitude and exhaustion are avoided. Moreover, he will at times use the weak scenes to introduce an element of comedy, of symbolism or of poetry, as he does in the dancing interlude in « A Bit o' Love », — or they may serve directly to increase the tension by protracting or delaying an expected development or effect. Again, apart from fulfilling these essentially dramatic purposes, the weak scenes also have their value for exposition, for the painting of character, or for supplying a social background and creating an atmosphere ; or else they convey a comment, didactic or otherwise, on a striking event that has just been presented. And, of course, they may also prepare fresh developments, or contain the germ of a new impulsion to be given to the play, which will appear after the climax of a subsequent strong scene.

It is easy enough to notice how closely the movement adopted as well as the formal division into acts and scenes, fit each time the design chosen for the development of the story. The constant adaptation of act construction and *tempo* to plot pattern, of the three to psychological truth, and, generally speaking, of form to matter, together with the application of the dominant law of economy which gets the maximum result out of means conventional enough and voluntarily limited, are among the distinguishing qualities of this dramatic art, which, with no striking invention in the matter of structural technique, manages to be undeniably personal. The approximate reproduction at all degrees of the dramatic structure, in smaller and smaller models fitting, as it were, within one another, of the same pattern and of the same curve of *staccato* movement, in the basic action-unit as in the more elaborate act and in the whole of the play, supplements other forms of

internal unity with one less commonplace and more subtle : that of architecture. We are reminded of a set of Chinese boxes or hollow spheres, all closely nested inside one another. This repetition of a design might, of course, in some circumstances seem artificial ; here, where it does not intrude itself too forcibly on the spectator's consciousness, it affords to cultured taste an additional form of genuine, delicate enjoyment.

CHAPTER VI

1. EXPOSITION AND PREPARATION. — 2. DIALOGUE.
3. STAGE DIRECTIONS.

I

The time and space limitations of the drama usually involve for the playwright the necessity of acquainting his audience with what does not actually happen before their eyes, by means of exposition and messengers' reports; they also make it incumbent upon him to pay the most careful attention to preparation, through which tension is enhanced, effect more keenly felt, and dramatic unity preserved from beginning to end.

The presentation of characters, with their names, relationships, idiosyncracies that require to be known for a drama to be intelligible from the outset, can be said to constitute part of the exposition. Galsworthy gets through this formality of introduction very early in the play; the characters soon tell us what matters about themselves and about one another in concise, expressive sentences, and the information is imparted to us in the course of a very natural dialogue, and rarely without the emotional note that helps to enliven such revelations. Galsworthy was not fond of including explanations in the printed list of *dramatis personæ*; he obviously and rightly felt that the drama must be self-contained and self-sufficient; and that its very nature demands that everything belonging to a play should be conveyed

through action on the stage. Accordingly, except on a few occasions, he followed the practice of including nothing but names in the list of characters, leaving it for the actual dialogue to do the rest, and whetting our curiosity from the beginning by not lavishing information upon us before the rise of the curtain.

The exposition proper purports to make the audience acquainted with the state of affairs prevailing at the moment when the drama begins. If badly managed, it can be highly detrimental to the action and to the interest aroused in the spectator; it is, therefore, desirable to reduce it to the least possible proportions, and whenever possible, to disguise it. This Galsworthy well succeeds in doing, while putting us in possession, nevertheless, of all the past history of both characters and incidents that is needed for a right understanding and appreciation of what is to come. We have already referred to certain striking examples of economy in this respect. In « Joy », although, as mentioned earlier, practically the whole of the first act is devoted to exposition of one kind or another, there is no superfluity; leading characters are sketched for us and situations outlined, in the exchange of a few sentences; remarks of seeming insignificance are weighty with implications — thus, quite a lot is learned from the mother's warning to her daughter: « You'll only get knocked up again ». We gather from it that Joy is supposed to be in the country for her health, and thus learn the apparent reason why, for two months, she has not been with her mother in London (1).

Besides the principal exposition, further information

(1) In dispatching the exposition as he does, in the shortest possible time, Galsworthy assumes that his audience will be punctual. Yet, « the problem of how to open a play, is « complicated in the English theatre by considerations wholly « foreign to art ». Owing to the late-comers, the first scene is too frequently drowned in noise and disturbance. « It used at « one time to be the fashion to add to the advertisement of a play « that the audience should be punctually in their seats, as the « interest began with the rise of the curtain » (W. ARCHER, *Play-making*, pp. 99-100). Even now, there is hardly a year goes by, without some newspaper dramatic critic reopening the campaign against late-comers,

may have to be conveyed later. This is in plays of investigation and consequences, where gradual revelation is the mainspring of the intrigue (psychological and otherwise), such as « The Skin Game », for instance ; or generally speaking when, for some reason, a vital piece of the action has been removed from the stage, either for the sake of tension, or of necessity if long lapses of time are supposed to have taken place between the different acts : thus, throughout the third act of « Justice », essential information has to be imparted indirectly concerning the present situation of the liberated convict, and the sort of life led by the woman he loved since the two were parted. At different times, in old drama, special characters were used for the purpose : the messenger and the confidant. Galsworthy does not discard, altogether, these elementary devices ; although he greatly improves upon them, and cleverly rids them of their artificiality wherever possible by judiciously drawing on the aspects and conditions of modern life. In « The Mob », the part of the messenger is played mainly by the voices of newspaper boys in the street, shouting a great victory in big headlines (2). Elsewhere, as in « Defeat » and « The Foundations », one of the protagonists is stationed at a window to describe, on a note of excitement or with deep feeling, what can be seen outside (3). Of the confidant, Galsworthy gives us one or two examples : in the earlier scenes of « The Fugitive » there is Clare's friend, who can hardly be said to play any other part ; in « Exiled », the commercial traveller seems to exist solely to gossip with the innkeeper (4). But usually, Galsworthy, like Ibsen before him, avoids artificiality by choosing for the confidants characters particularly well fitted for such parts by reason of their social function or profession : a lawyer, as in the later scenes of « The Fugitive », and in « Justice » ; or a secretary, as in « The Mob ». A characteristic method is to make use of a child or, it

(2) Acts I and II.

(3) Act III.

(4) Act I and Act III, Sc. 2.

may be, a young girl, to extract information from his or her elders in the play. This shows consideration for verisimilitude ; besides the manifold dramatic purposes to which such a figure can be adapted, the propensity of children to submit us to a running fire of questions makes them fit instruments for exposition. On the other hand, a dialogue with a juvenile lacks balance, and as his or her questions must often be answered irrelevantly, the device will involve desirable knowledge being withheld from the spectator unless the child is treated as an adult. We are particularly conscious of this incongruity in the conversation between Mrs Strangeways and Ivy, in Act I of « A Bit o' Love », as well as in « The Foundations », where the child's interrogations are many and lengthy. Anyhow, it is but seldom that Galsworthy introduces a character whose only mission is to enlighten the audience, and, as a rule, his confidants take an active part in the drama and have an influence upon the development of the action.

Another traditional form of exposition is the monologue. Of this we shall have more to say later. Suffice it to mention that Galsworthy does not dismiss this trick, but renews it, when necessary, in a most skilful fashion. The first scene of « The Silver Box » is almost an expository monologue, but this dribbling speech in the mouth of a drunken man is entirely life-like. Of course, this may involve the danger, since a drunken monologue may easily degenerate into farce, of striking a misleading note at the outset of a serious drama.

Other methods of renewing the forms of exposition are to be found in other plays. In « Strife » it is by reading the minutes of a directors' meeting that the characters make us acquainted with the existing situation and even with the imminent intervention of another set of *dramatis personæ* (5). In « The Moh », More lets us know what his intentions are, not in any heart-to-heart talk either with Steel or Katherine, but

(5) Act I.

by means of a clever contrivance, and at the same time one so natural that we do not think twice about it : that of dictating a letter ; earlier in the play we have learned how he feels on the whole question at issue, by the rehearsal of his parliamentary speech (6).

In Ibsen we find that the exposition is not contained in some introductory act or scene, but practically goes on all through the play, with steady gradation of effects thus helping to enhance the emotion. The subjects that Galsworthy chooses, as well as his plots, are favourable to such treatment. For instance, in interrogations, of which there are so many in his works, the exposition taking the shape of information forced out from an unwilling character, contributes to the tension, all the more so as we foresee what disastrous consequences will ensue for the person so examined (7).

Yet another form which Galsworthy resorts to — we find it, for instance, in « Exiled » and « The Silver Box » — is a torrent of grievances very naturally given voice to in a violent speech by one of the weaker characters, the malcontent (8).

An excellent example of delayed exposition delicately treated occurs in Scene II, Act II, of « Loyalties ». The conversation between Margaret Orme and Lady Adela is a perfectly natural piece of gossip, throwing considerable light upon Dancy's past career, as well as revealing plainly the spirit of clanship existing among his friends.

Journalists, acting as interviewers, are pressed into service for the purpose of laying open both concrete and psychological situations ; we find them in « Exiled » and in « A Family Man » (9). There are also instances

(6) Act I.

(7) For example : the questioning of Mrs Jones by Barthwick, in « The Silver Box », Act I, Sc. 3 ; of Freda by Lady Cheshire, in « The Eldest Son », Act II ; of Cloe by old Hornblower, in « The Skin Game », Act II, Sc. 2. An interesting variation occurs in the last scene of « Escape » : we know the Parson is reluctant to lie but determined to conceal the truth ; Matt Denant's heroism alone saves his honour.

(8) « Exiled », Act I : the Tramp's dialogue with Mr East ; « The Silver Box », Act II, Sc. 1 : Jones's speeches.

(9) « Exiled », Acts I and II ; « A Family Man », Act III, Sc. 2. In « The Show », which is an indictment of modern press methods, journalists are responsible for most of the exposition.

of exposition effected by conversations between servants, as in the first scene of « The Fugitive » and the second scene of « The Silver Box », but although this is not contrary to life, it is a cheap trick which has been too often used, long before and since Galsworthy, not to sound artificial.

As parts of one and the same work, the several scenes and acts of a play must present together elements of continuity. And this the dramas of Galsworthy unmistakably do, except for a few « insertions » already noted. From the outset up to the final curtain, each separate incident is carefully prepared and is firmly linked with what precedes it and with what follows. According to the younger Dumas, this art of preparation is the whole art of drama. If this is really true, Galsworthy often came very near indeed to being the perfect dramatist ; he is a *virtuoso* in constant dovetailing, and in the choosing and placing of what William Archer most expressively called the necessary « finger-posts » (10). His plays teem at every moment with indications about theme, subject, plot and the future evolution of the action, so that the attitude of the spectator is partly that of an interpreter constantly on the look-out for clues, since an apparently trifling detail may, owing to Galsworthy's rigid economy of treatment, prove to be of vital consequence. A passing reference to the distribution of bedrooms in the country house, before the arrival of Molly (« Joy », Act I), puts us at once on the scent ; the fire in the first scene of « Strife » leaves the understanding audience in no doubt as to the very different conditions of material comfort existing in the homes of the strikers, thus focussing the whole situation when the play begins.

A playwright must constantly bear in mind that the

(10) See WILLIAM ARCHER, *Play-making*, XII (Preparation : the finger-post) : « Yes, it is very largely the art of delicate and « unobtrusive preparation, of helping an audience to divine « whither it is going, while leaving it to wonder how it is to get « there. On the other hand, it is also the art of avoiding « laborious, artificial and obvious preparations which lead to « little or nothing » (p. 156).

point of the drama will be partly missed if the finger-posts do not appear clearly ; and that it is worse than useless to display them in vain. It is also essential for them to point in a definite direction, and not to send us up wrong turnings. Each of them, therefore, has to find its counter-part in the later stages of the action. Only if this is all skilfully done, will the whole play have an effect of unity in the action which is one of the major dramatic qualities.

Galsworthy shows much ingenuity in underlining the significance of spoken words (not to mention *tableaux* in which the important element is made unmistakably plain to us, without any effort on our part). The clues in the dialogue, whether they fall in the silence of consternation, or on an exit, or stand out from the context, cannot fail to catch our attention. This result can be achieved by repetition, be it of a name, or of a mere word, or of a phrase. Thus Molly's name is pronounced as soon as the curtain rises on the first act of « Joy », and is repeated several times in the opening conversation, so that expectation is centred upon her long before she appears ; Peachey's reiterated ejaculation : « Thunder ! » at the end of the same act underlines the emotional situation that has arisen between the leading characters ; in « Strife », the recurrence of the phrase « a man of business », in the course of the first act, is very suggestive. There is opportunity for trenchant irony in such repetition where it occurs in circumstances contrasting widely with those in which it was originally used (11). Galsworthy has many adroit contrivances for causing words to be repeated with every appearance of naturalness : Cokeson's deafness, in « Justice », is a pretext for certain essential sentences

(11) In « The Silver Box », Act I, Sc. 3 : Barthwick says to Jack : « You and your sort are a nuisance to the community » ; the words are repeated by the Magistrate, addressing Jones, in Act III. A more subtle instance is to be found in « The Skin Game » : Mrs Jackman's : «And thank you kindly », upon which the Jackmans make their exit Act I, is practically repeated in Mrs Jackman's one line in Act III, Sc. 2. Considering all that has taken place in the interim there is devastating irony in the very banality of the words.

to be said more than once ; in trial scenes we have the judge drawing attention to parts of the evidence by insisting upon them and putting questions that probe deeper and deeper into the core of the matter.

In this constant foreshadowing of future action, the preparation may be very far-reaching : the sentence, « We are going to dance to-night », which is an indication of the length of time elapsing between the first and last acts of « Joy », occurs five pages before the first curtain. No less skilful dove-tailing is required to preserve in harmonious balance and to unite together the parallel currents of dramatic development as they are alternately revealed to us, and to maintain our interest in all. In « Strife » we have perhaps the clearest example of minute preparation and dove-tailing, resulting in a most acceptable and effective sequence of surprises. Towards the end of Act III, Roberts, delayed by his wife's death, arrives late for the meeting with the directors ; he knows nothing of the settlement that has been reached and believes the men to be still holding out. The opportunity is thus given for him to make his speech of defiance and go down, fighting.

The attention paid by Galsworthy to psychological motives of action, the consciousness he feels of some ironical fatality at work upon man among the social forces that surround us, the very solidity of his stories, afford scope for the display of his skill in preparation. All the same, unqualified success does not invariably reward all his efforts. True, his finger-posts all point to something, and to something definite. Yet some are misleading. In « The Mob », the debate between More and the delegation of voters (12) would authorize us to think that the subsequent action is to hinge on the question of the obedience of an elected representative to his constituency : such expectation is not fulfilled. In « The Fugitive », too much prominence is given to Malise as the suspected lover, which seems for a time

(12) Act, II. More is thrown over by his constituents ; but this is only one among many kindred episodes. The real issue is something much greater.

to imply a triangular play (13). In « Joy », we are tempted to infer, from the Colonel's pointed remark about swindled army officers (14), that the main plot is going to concern itself with some such complication.

On the other hand, the finger-posts are on occasions too obvious. Galsworthy sins here against good taste in his habit of underlining preparatory indications : in Act III, Sc. II of « The Mob », Olive's comment « Your hair is nice, Mummy. It's particular to-night », is going to be echoed by her father a little later on with the words « What have you done to your hair ? It's wonderful to-night ». This remark, with all its sensual, almost physiological implications, not lost upon the audience, shocks our delicacy, being addressed by a small child to her own mother (15).

But the gravest defect altogether (because not arising out of pure accident), is a general all-round excess in carefulness, too much preparation, too much dovetailing, too many clues ; the impression given by many of the plays, as a result of this, is one of over-crowding, which tends to nullify the power of a work of art. In the opening of « The Eldest Son », among others, we feel that every word is momentous and we strive in vain to keep in mind all the indications that later may prove valuable ; in so doing, we get bewildered and weary. Even in our artistic appreciation, we may be led by this over-scrupulousness to pay too great attention to cleverness and ingenuity and thus follow the drama with an eye on its intellectual quality, rather than be carried away, as we should, by an irresistible flow of emotional power.

(13) He is not the main problem for Clare, and it is with her fate alone that the play is concerned. Malise drops out of the plot before the end.

(14) Act I.

(15) Of course, the child's remark preceding the explanation provided by the dialogue between More and his wife, the shock might well appear to be retrospective, hence much attenuated. But not so, indeed, for the spectators and readers familiar with the Galsworthian atmosphere. They, at least, « smell a rat » from the first, and a particularly repellent one, at that.

II

By what concrete means are the action of a play materialized, the story, ideas and feelings conveyed, the characters revealed, the tension kept up, the effects and the preparation made sensible to the audience? The constituents of dramatic expression are of three orders: the wording, or dialogue — the stage business, that is, the characters' movements, gestures, facial changes, and so on — and also a static element that consists in the choice of settings and costumes. The clever use and combination of the different means of dramatic expression by an author provides for a cultured audience a fount of intense aesthetic enjoyment; the most valuable qualities are those of the spoken dialogue, both in the very form of the language and in the economical, forceful management of its resources.

Galsworthy's language is essentially dramatic. In vocabulary and syntax it is simple, concise and direct, made up of short sentences as befits speeches that have to be heard and followed rapidly by a highly strung audience. It makes little use of the conjunctions which supply the logical relation between clauses, being more of a juxtaposition of concrete sentences. It is replete with everyday words and familiar turns of speech, whose association is well known to us, so that everything can be easily understood and appreciated to the full without strain. This conciseness and simplicity of the language favours rapid movement and even scenic oppositions. It enables the writer to pack the few hours at his disposal with the maximum of material, no time being wasted in formal oratory. All the elements of the dialogue are turned to the best possible account. Names and nick-names convey suggestions and associations; the use of Christian names implies bonds of friendship or intimacy, or, again, the relationship existing between the characters is either specifically indicated by one word in the vocative or by the suitability of the tone of

the speech itself (16). Thanks to the economy of the style, the play is enriched not only with effects, but with pregnant sentences: a highly dramatic definition, appalling in its implication, is contained in Robert's line: « Ye've been an enemy of every man that has come into your works », in his speech of personal defiance addressed to Anthony, in the first act of « Strife ». Again, Margaret Orme completely sums up clan warfare, when she says (« Loyalties », Act II, Sc. II): « We all cut each other's throats from the best of motives ». In the first scene of « The Silver Box », Jones's reply: « I'm a bloomin' Conservative », in answer to Jack's: « I'm a Liberal too — wha're you? », is a formula of concentrated irony, in the mouth of the man embittered by poverty and unemployment. The drawing of a character may be achieved in one word: the unblushing selfishness of children is well inferred from the verb in Olive's: « Shall I lend him my toffee? » (« The Mob », Act II). There is great pathos in Mrs Jones's little mannerisms of speech and in her sentence: « He was not himself », which is her way of saying that a man has been drinking. A tempestuous succession of moods, together with effort at restraint, appears in Joy's unfinished gesture of menace at the words of Lever: « Now hit me in the face — hit me! Hit me as hard as you can. Go on, Joy, it'll do you good ». In « The Mob » Galsworthy finds again and adapts to his own use that most dramatic of all apostrophes that history has handed down to us — Caesar's dying cry, the three words with their burden of tragic

(16) For example: Jill's « Dodo », in her opening speech, indicates a close relationship with Billerist, and the relationship is defined almost immediately afterwards by her use of the word « Father » (« The Skin Game », Act I). And again, Ann's exclamation: « Daddy! », is practically her first word in « The Pigeon », Act I. In « The Eldest Son », Act I, Freda's « Miss Christine... Mrs Keith, I mean » shows that Christine is a member of the family; through the beginning of this scene, moreover, the relationships between all the characters are neatly indicated, either by the way Freda addresses them, or by their remarks to each other. In « The Show », Act I, Anne's speech over the telephone to Geoffrey, which opens the play, allows us to guess that they are lovers.

astonishment and pathetic protest : « You too, Steel ? »

Instead of using long periods to convey strength of feeling, the author frequently obtains his effects by means of interjections and words in italics, or broken speeches that are not incoherent, but are cut up by the force of emotion. Laconicism is put to good use : we have, in « *Strife* », a portrait of Anthony, with his brief utterances and reduced vocabulary, where « No » and « Never » figure so constantly ; and Dancy, a leading character, rarely vouchsafes more than a monosyllable ; his announcement of the catastrophe with the single word « Spun » (« *Loyalties* », Act III, Sc. III), is characteristic and admirably reveals his state of mind.

But where Galsworthy chiefly scores, is in having discovered, or at least fully revealed, all the possibilities of under-statement and under-expression. The revelation of the forgery in « *Justice* » takes place in the most dispassionate speech, and further on, Act III, Scene II, terrible things are insinuated in a most matter-of-fact line of the prison governor : « They all had to go through it once for the first time » —, and in Falder's still more tragic reply : « Yes, I shall get to be like them in time, I suppose ». We have already quoted Mrs Jones's « He was not himself », which is a form of under-statement ; but her qualified description of intoxication — « He was almost quite drunk » — is significant of her whole attitude to life and to her « social betters ». Elsewhere, feelings burst out in a telling manner after an attempt to hide them in deliberate impersonality ; or, again, in the cautiousness of an innuendo. Reticence lends them greater force and permits, besides, delicate treatment of a difficult situation ; thus with the interview between Sir William and Freda, in Act II of « *The Eldest Son* ». A particularly short answer may be occasioned by intensity of emotion too great to be voiced : for instance, in the scene between Mrs Bradmere and Strangway (« *A Bit o' Love* », Act III, Sc. I), when she says, referring to Strangway's wife having left him : « I know you're in as grievous trouble as a man can be », he only replies with the

monosyllable : « Yes ». The subsequent outburst, following Mrs Bradmere's persistence, discloses the measure of the earlier restraint. We have already referred to the device, quite original and repeated in many places, which consists in forcing out words, ridiculously inadequate, from the very heart of a character by nature inarticulate.

In the wording of the dialogue, therefore, we find that tension and effect are contrived without superfluity of language. The movement of the dialogue, too, has its significance ; in general, it corresponds with that of feeling and action, the length of the speeches varying greatly. There are the cryptic formulae and the short *sotto voce* remarks ; or the crisp phrases that imply more than they say. There are some long speeches also, though they are few, and every possible device is used to render them dramatic and scenic. The two long orations of Frome and Cleaver in the second act of « Justice » run into four full, long pages altogether — over two thousand words ; then follows the judge's summing-up, with six hundred words. Alive to the danger of tiring the audience, Galsworthy multiplies his efforts to break up such speeches, or to associate them with the evolution of the psychological plot : thus Harness's lines in the first act of « Strife » are entirely adapted to the situation ; the discussion on patriotism in « The Mob », Act I, is laden with opposing passions and exhibits an interesting conflict of personalities.

In all these we are faced with the problem of the didactic and dramatic styles in plays based upon social subjects. To be at the same time dramatic, a didactic speech must possess some emotional appeal, as well as a reasonable amount of verisimilitude ; and also it must endeavour not to overburden the action and not to slow down the progress of the drama, but, on the contrary, advance with it and advance the situation, be it only through ensuing repercussions upon the characters. The didactic element may be occasionally lightened by comedy, or simply by the style of the language which, if it is vivid and picturesque, renders the matter less

indigest. All this Galsworthy generally manages to accomplish. Even those final comments with which he concludes his plays are frequently burdened with great emotion or scathing irony.

And this continual progression of the dialogue, hand in hand with the evolution of the characters and the development of the situation is the rule in most of Galsworthy's dramas. The scene between Enid and Mrs Roberts, in the second act of « Strife », is an excellent picture of human inconsistency : Jones's diatribe, in the beginning of Act II (« The Silver Box »), is not just a long catalogue of social evils ; it is alive with spiritual revolt and personal grievances. The very turn of the sentences is the reflection of the feelings to which they give expression ; successions of moods, conflicts of personalities, appear in the form and the movement of the whole dialogue ; not to mention the many mannerisms which the author delights to depict when he deals with a figure of fun. When Bill, in « The Eldest Son », breaks the news to the game-keeper, he does so in the only way possible for a weak boy, ashamed of his actions, which is by rushing headlong into the announcement he dreads to make : « We are to be married at once ». The contrast between Bill and his father, again, is disclosed in the length of their lines (17). In « Joy », while the girl's emotion is outspoken, Dick's, on the contrary, is implied. Most speeches of Cokeson (« Justice »), are well in character, with a good mixture of business routine, homely concerns, and religious fervour manifest in the vocabulary (18). Jones's out-pourings about social conditions, already mentioned, well show the state of mind of

(17) « The Eldest Son », Act I, Sc. 2.

(18) The conversation with Falder, Act I, is typical :

« Cokeson. — This isn't right, Falder.

Falder. — It shan't occur again, sir.

Cokeson. — It's an improper use of these premises.

Falder. — Yes, sir.

Cokeson. — You quite understand — the party was in some distress ; and, having children with her, I allowed my feelings — (He opens a drawer and produces from it a tract). Just take this ! " Purity in the Home ". It's a well-written thing. »

the unemployed embittered by long privations, for whom one of the few remaining consolations is to lash himself into a mood of fierce, solitary rebellion. In the same play, the questions of Roper are to the point, dry and cynical (19). In the scenes of quarrel, the dialogue adds to the impression of moral and mental confusion, and to a still greater degree where actual physical violence intervenes : as in the strikers' meeting (« Strife », Act II, Sc. II) ; or in « The Mob » (20), with the various anonymous figures of the crowd standing out for an instant, each with his characteristic word and gesture.

And all this, except in a few non-naturalistic plays, rarely gives the impression of artificiality or of having been made to measure. It is realistic, to the point of using the formal jargon of the law, the abbreviations, and the figurative representations of the speech in favour among a class of society or in a district of the country. When external realism is not so evident, we are almost sure to find at least internal realism. In cold blood, Malise's explosion at the end of the first scene of Act III, in « The Fugitive », does not quite pass muster : outraged at the discovery on the stairs of the two detectives who have tracked Clare to his lodgings, Malise drives them away with the words : « You've run her to earth ; your job's done. Kennel up, hounds ! » This speech which causes some uneasiness when read, when it occurs on the stage is convincing enough, not only because it has been preceded by careful preparation, but because it is, to a point, the poetic sublimation of extremely vigorous and very human indignation.

Taking it as a whole, this dialogue lies open to the reproach of being, if anything, too heavily laden with meaning, too weighty with significance. There are occasions, also, when one notices errors in taste, and a tendency to staginess.

It is rare to find the dialogue moving too quickly, although in some of the most self-contained plays it is

(19) Act II, Sc. 2.

(20) Act III, Sc. 1 ; Act IV.

inevitably so, certain slight psychological changes developing too slowly for translation into language when the time for expression is limited. For a like reason, some scenes are over-crowded, not only with important clues, but also with dialogue effects, the accumulation of which is somewhat wearisome. Moreover, Galsworthy, who never contents himself with giving a hint to his audience, is apt to repeat lines which sum up his moral, and to follow this up by ramming them into the spectator's mind. He is fond of underlining a situation or an important idea, by means of questions and comments, thus labouring, and therefore weakening, the effect. The end of « *Justice* » might have been more forceful without the much-praised last two cues (21) ; and many are the examples of moral tags, themes, keywords, being heavily insisted upon, or underlying motives being too explicitly brought to light. This is a sin against the nature of drama itself, since in a play we expect psychology to be revealed clearly and naturally in actions, but not to be obviously stressed or disserted upon. Moreover, when Galsworthy is so fortunate as to hit upon a theme that appeals to him personally, he does not deny himself the pleasure of dwelling upon it : in Act IV of « *Justice* », Falder relates his experiences since leaving prison in a long drawn out lament that really does not forward the action very much and, worse still, hardly succeeds in moving us. As though all this were not sufficient to hold up the action, we find occasions when the dialogue goes off at a tangent, running the risk of misleading the audience as to its real import (22).

(21) Professor Gilbert Murray discussed this play very fully by letter with Galsworthy, especially the conclusion. In his letter quoted by Marrot (undated, p. 252) he says : « I wouldn't lose : " My, dear, my pretty " for anything ; nor could I bear to end on any other words than " Gentle Jesus ". I think that line is real genius — both those lines ».

(22) Falder's conversation with the How partners. After James has suggested his breaking with Ruth, the talk ranges from Falder's nerves to Ruth's brutal husband and, thence, to her financial straits. At one moment we are tempted to think that a new interest is to be developed in the shape of a fresh start in life for Ruth.

Besides these, which we will call errors of quantity, there are some of quality, that make us marvel at the unevenness of certain scenes and at the lack of taste that an otherwise fastidious writer will occasionally be guilty of. The pathetic appeals are often cloying ; in the children's scenes there are too many words of endearment and too great a flow of sloppy sentimentality, the result being that we end by heartily detesting the little olive branches (23). Some sentences are used without any regard for character and thus strike a false note (24). But, most remarkable of all, there are moments when the author's instinct for what is natural and scenic seems to desert him completely. Although Galsworthy would assuredly have felt injured if taxed with stooping to melodrama, he did from time to time indulge in violence of language and exaggerated declamations which savour strongly of theatricality and destroy the illusion of life : Brice's last line in « *The Roof* », « Christ ! I'm done for ! To hell with it all ! Up — up — up ! », Bastable's « Your bluff called. Ha ! My patience is exhausted », in Act IV of « *The Forest* », are examples of this rather unfortunate tendency. Jones's line : « It's like a thousand serpents in me », and Strangway's big speech in the first scene, Act III, of « *A Bit o' Love* », are unadulterated melodrama. Some phrases, harmless enough in themselves, seem to belong inseparably to the world of paste-board : General Canynge's « For the honour of the Army and the Club » (« *Loyalties* », Act II, Sc. I), and Waller's « To brand him like this ! » (« *Justice* », Act I), are of this nature.

There are occasions, too, though not frequently, when restraint itself betrays a certain self-consciousness, so to speak, whereby it sounds just as artificial as the

(23) For example, « *The Mob* » : More never speaks to his little daughter without an endearing word : my sprite, sweetheart, my soul, etc. Acts I and IV.

(24) In « *Joy* », Dick's « It's not claret, Rose, I shouldn't warm it » is not quite in tone with his mood : a lovesick boy has not much sense of humour. Again, the manservant's : « Shall I leave « the sunset, sir ? », in Act I of « *The Fugitive* », is not in character, nor in keeping with the atmosphere of the play ; Paynter is not a butler in an Aldwych farce.

most violent expostulation. We have this impression with Clare's confession and the manner in which it is given : Clare (very still) : « You see, I love him » (25). But Clare is, at the best, a fairly exasperating person, whatever she may say or do, so that the whole trouble may lie in the very nature of the character, rather than in her modes of expression.

What we mean by the adjective non-scenic, in reference to dialogue, is that the latter sometimes seems to belong more to written than to acted drama. Occasional elaborations on themes, like the one about wallflowers by the self-pitying Molly (« Joy »), or certain effects of oratory, as in Act IV of « The Mob », can only be appreciated when read, and they are intellectual arabesques on the main line of the dialogue. Some perfectly logical pieces of reasoning are incompatible with emotion, and More's speech to the crowd in the same act of this play would in no way convince either an incensed populace or even the audience gathered in a theatre (26). Moreover, one of Galsworthy's endearing weaknesses is that he cannot always resist the temptation to place an epigram, even in moments of acute tension (27). And such epigrams, as often as they fit the character or the situation, are the expression of the author's own thoughts on given subjects, in arresting terms which he himself appears

(25) Act III, Sc. 2.

(26) Indeed, some developments, metaphorical or otherwise, may sound, when spoken, too « thought out » and connected, too literary for moments of high emotion. Thus in « Joy », Molly's outburst to Lever, Act III, beginning : « Listen ! One can't sit it out and dance it too. Which is it to be, Maurice, dancing — or sitting out ?... »

(27) Thus, in « The Roof », Sc. VII : Moulteney's « It's an ill fire that tests no metal ». And this when the hotel is burning and Lennox's dead body is lying near him ! Or again, Mrs Builder's : « The Camille and the last straw », in Act II of « A Family Man ». Mrs Builder has great self-control and this may be in character, but nevertheless she is leaving her husband after twenty-three years of life together. If all feeling is dead, as it must surely be to make puns at such a moment, why does she return to Builder in Act III ? It is only fair to say, however, that Galsworthy succumbs to this temptation far less frequently than many an English writer, from Lily to Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw.

to be proud of. These scintillations, the intellectual quality of which constitutes an impediment to emotion, are less abundant in this drama than in the comedies of Oscar Wilde or Bernard Shaw, but we suspect the reason to be that Galsworthy had less brilliancy than the other two authors.

Captious criticism might also point out a few examples of incorrect speech not justified by character : Lady Dedmond's « It's her » (« The Fugitive ») ; or the inferior elocutionary quality of the language in such sentences as : « That's as certain as that I shall die », and « You do owe it to us to try and spare your father », both from « The Fugitive » (28) — two sentences which are far from coming trippingly on the tongue. Galsworthy is too fond of cheap mannerisms that he esteems necessary for revealing character, and the term « Mem Sahib », so repeatedly used by the young officer when addressing his mother-in-law in « The Eldest Son » palls upon us after a time. There is an overplus of the fox-hunting and horse-flesh metaphors in the conversation of the well-to-do, particularly in « The Eldest Son » and « The Fugitive ». As for the figurative spelling, with the many abbreviations, solecisms and slang terms, it may enhance the picturesqueness of the dialogue : the choice of the words may have a literary and dramatic value, so far as they tone up expression of feeling and ideas and confer upon it an admirable concrete quality. But the question arises whether it is altogether the office of the playwright to incorporate the phonetic form of the language in the written script. The fitting-in of the accent and pronunciation could with advantage be left to the actor, who should be guided by some general instructions of the author, rather than being « cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd » within the rigid limits of a minutely prepared text (29). As for the readers of the play, unless they resort to reading aloud, most of the effects of clipped speech are, to some extent, lost on them. Doubtlessly, Galsworthy

(28) Act III, Sc. 2.

(29) Here again, Galsworthy's use of phonetic spelling is by no

intended to be realistic and to define social contrasts by these means, but it has more than once been pointed out that furnishing too precise information about a *milieu*, either in settings or subject, invites hostile cavilling regarding the truth of each detail (30).

But the disadvantage with all criticism is that when drawing attention to the weaknesses of any work of art, one fatally gives them too much relative importance as compared with all that does not call for comment, for the reason that it is uniformly good. It is the old story of never hearing your clock until it stops. While essential, fundamental qualities are mentioned once and for all, shortcomings are continually attracting notice. The same remark applies to minor inventions that, though excellent in their way, do not necessarily deserve the amount of attention instinctively bestowed upon them. In the plays of Galsworthy such interesting devices are many. There is his habit of recalling the opening of a play in its last line, or last *tableau*, thus emphasizing in our minds the unity of the whole drama : in « The Skin Game », the curtain rises on Hillerist and Jill, and they it is that hold the stage when the final curtain drops. In « The Fugitive », the last words : « A lady », re-echo the comment of the servant in the first scene : « A thoroughbred ». Some effects of older drama are very happily renewed : we have already quoted More's « You too, Steel ? », immediately suggestive of Shakespeare's « Julius Caesar ». The old tricks of the monologue, of the aside from one character to another, or the thought spoken to oneself, take on a new lease of life in Galsworthy's hands. He uses them charily, adapting them to modern resources. Thus, the monologue may appear as a telephone conversation, as a speech rehearsed in private, or « writing

means as systematic as in some plays of Bernard Shaw. (The preface to « Captain Brassbound's Conversion », on « English and American Dialects » is dated August 1900).

(30) A grave offence against art, in this connection, occurs, besides, in « The Foundations », where Galsworthy is guilty of deliberately disfiguring a beautiful poem by putting Blake's lines into the mouth of a child with an atrocious cockney accent,

aloud » ; through the latter device, the Press in « The Foundations », Act I, plays the part of the Greek Chorus. The method is repeated in « A Family Man ». The aside is rare, but when it occurs it does not jar upon our sense of verisimilitude. In « The Eldest Son », Act I, Scene II, Lady Cheshire's comment : « Yes, I suppose he has made her his superior », is pronounced loudly enough not only for the audience but also for Sir William to overhear it ; if her husband catches it imperfectly it is because he is himself, at the moment, addressing someone else, but his next words show that her remark has not altogether escaped him. Unexpected turns in discussion are gratefully welcomed, and there is surprise as well as recognition of psychological truth when, in the third act of « Joy », we hear Molly suddenly replying to her self-reproach and misgivings by a challenging outbreak (31). Special notice must also be taken of the use, again in « Joy », of the three-cornered conversation, two characters speaking, as it were, over the head of a third person of dull intelligence (32). There are excellent comic possibilities in the latter's literal interpretation of words whose significance he does not fully grasp, while at the same time his apparently irrelevant remarks go nearer to the core of the matter than we should at first be inclined to think likely. (Of comic element in expression, as a whole, we shall speak more fully in a later chapter.)

All this shows extremely conscientious care, as well as undeniable originality on the part of the author. Thanks to the frequent recurrence of such inventions, as well as to the presence everywhere of more fundamental qualities, we may well say that Galsworthy's dramatic language, with its simplicity and with its constant application of methods of concentration and

(31) « *Mrs Gwyn.* — I brought you into the world, and you say that to me ? Have I been a bad mother to you ? »

Joy. — Oh ! Mother !

Mrs Gwyn. — Ashamed ? Am I to live all my life like a dead woman because you're ashamed ? Am I to live like the dead because you're a child that knows nothing of life ? »

(32) See Lever's dialogue with Peachey, Act II ; the conversation between Molly, the Colonel and Peachey, Act III.

elimination, is, taking it all round, a very good example of what has been termed by the Goncourts : « *le langage littéraire parlé* ».

III

Galsworthy's dialogue is scenic not only because of its organic qualities, but also because it is dynamic and well calculated to advance hand in hand with gesture and with stage business. Word and gesture at every step complete each other and all these plays are remarkable for the amount of animation that pervades the stage and the way the author seems to have visualized every facial expression and every bodily movement. Some of these gestures are trilling and correspond simply to a realistic concern, being provided in order to convey an impression of life : too much importance must not, therefore, be attributed to them and they must be taken by the actor extremely quickly. But if gesticulation is already good as a natural accompaniment to ordinary dialogue, there are times when it is vital ; that is to say, when it is required to tone up important lines which would otherwise appear weak and ineffective.

Amid all these motions of the characters, the exits and entrances are particularly well managed and natural : there is nothing unlikely about the way people enter and leave Malise's room in « *The Fugitive* » (33), and no awkwardness over all the going and coming of the characters on various business errands in « *Justice* » (34). It has to be borne in mind, however, that unless we take much of this activity for what it is, namely, a realistic accompaniment to the central motif, the effect will be to make the action seem fragmentary, an impression that the very obvious division of the acts and scenes into scene-units, and the approaches to these from different points, can only intensify. This happens in « *Joy* »,

(33) Acts II and III.

(34) Act I.

where there are too many entrances and exits, devised for the commodity of the plot, so that we come to question their naturalness and conclude that some of them are artificial, as well as destructive of continuity.

The movements that take place, not before or after, but during a phase of action, are used, as they should be, to disclose the psychology of the characters when words are missing or insufficient. They show up internal strife or conflict between different individuals. At the end of the first act of « *The Fugitive* », the action is continued after Clare's last words ; it is carried on by George's violent agitation, his momentary hesitation and final rush towards, and slamming-to, of the door. One of the most often quoted of Galsworthy's daring experiments is the whole scene in « *Justice* », where not a word is pronounced, and where the evolution of a character is shown in a rapid succession of gestures culminating in frenzy. All of which are, in reality, the equivalent of a long monologue such as an older and more conventional technique might have used for the revelation of Falder's mental states and of the growing fever that consumes him.

Besides thus forwarding the action by its own means, stage business may also, of course, conspire with the dialogue to throw clearer light on a given mood of the character. In « *The Eldest Son* », Act III, the words : « It is very painful for me to have to do this » are accompanied by the indication that the speaker turns away from the girl and speaks to the fire. Following or not upon an uncompleted speech, stage business may occur as a very effective mode of under-statement, as it does in « *The Silver Box* », Act II, at the end of the second scene (35). Moreover, in the third act of the same play, Marlow's reluctance to answer the judge's questions about Mrs Jones is revealed in a quiet way, by a mere nod.

(35) Mrs Barthwick is moved when she hears a child crying outside her window. Marlow tells her it is Mrs Jones's little boy, who has come to find his mother. But the mother has just been taken into custody at the instigation of the Barthwick family.

Stage action, as distinct from dialogue, may frequently be useful in underlining certain words, although in this connection our author does not always exercise all the restraint that he might. What has been noticed about his dialogue is observable here also : that is to say, the underlining is occasionally somewhat laboured, as appears, to quote one instance, in the second scene of the third act of « Justice », when the Governor, looking after the departing prisoner, shakes his head sadly over the situation. Much superior is the use made of entrances and exits to stress an important remark or to draw attention to a particular character. The coming and going of servants, interrupting their masters' conversation, besides being an entirely normal proceeding, has an effect in the building up of suspense. Business is often managed so as to clear the stage for the coming climax, or to prepare a tableau, unless in itself it constitutes the climax, as Barthwick stopping his ears at the end of the last scene, Act II, of « The Silver Box ».

In naturalistic dramas one purpose of stage action is to further realism, and Galsworthy is quite ready to face this exigency with all its consequences. Where coarseness and brutality are called for, he is not timorous about employing them : « A Bit o' Love », despite its poetic strain, does not present any idyllic picture of village life. In the same way, for all their sobriety, his plays contain many incidents of physical violence — blows are struck, there is « hustling » by crowds, fighting and so on — and on several occasions the lifeless body of one of the characters is brought upon the stage.

But modern realism concerns itself rather with the picture of the insignificant than with that of the

Mrs Barthwick, touched by the child's distress, tells her husband that they should not proceed in the prosecution, and Barthwick replies that the matter is out of their hands. The remainder of the action, until the curtain falls, passes without speech : « Mrs Barthwick turns her back to the window. There is an « expression of distress upon her face. She stands motionless, « compressing her lips. The crying begins again. Barthwick « covers his ears with his hands, and Marlow shuts the window. « The crying ceases. The curtain drops. »

unpleasant and shocking. In the gestures of his characters, Galsworthy evokes by many little touches the « trivial round and common task ». Mrs Miler's dusting the chair for the visitor (« The Fugitive », Act II), may perhaps seem an over-worked trick to us nowadays, but probably when Galsworthy imagined it, such a gesture had the charm of novelty as a piece of theatrical business.

The comic stage business is uneven — sometimes good and sometimes bad, and alas ! more often bad than good. The little incident of Tibby (« A Bit o' Love », Act II, Sc. I), with her pipe and her eleven pennies, is not unwelcome, but, on the other hand, much of the comedy business in « Joy » is next door to farce, not to mention the Sandlebury burlesque in « Strife », and all the tedious romping of Phyllis and Jock in « Old English ». « Windows » we have already referred to, and it is not necessary to dilate further upon this rather indifferent piece of work. It may also be objected that in several plays the language of flowers is used to excess. As for the symbolical intention of certain gestures, it, too, often suffers by being over-explicit ; and when it comes to spreading the Union Jack over More's prostrate body we feel that the author is really trying us rather high.

We see, for our part, only one piece of stage business which is imposed upon the author by actual stage necessities : it is the calling of Moaney into the prison passage (« Justice », Act III, Sc. II), in order to bring him before the audience. Naturally, a good playwright will endeavour to avoid such pitfalls.

Many of the weaknesses as well as the merits of all these dramas arise partly out of the fact that Galsworthy was a novelist, before he wrote for the theatre. Everything described is seen in every minute detail in his mind's eye, and his success in achieving an impression of life upon his stage is largely attributable to this power. Conversely, this very quality has its drawbacks, for it not infrequently happens that an effect has been so closely observed that it becomes a matter of impossibility to convey all its aspects across the foot-

lights. While the difference between two temperaments is well indicated in « The Eldest Son », Act III, Sir William, under stress of great emotion, mopping his brow, while Lady Cheshire sits shivering by the fire, there are other external signs upon which the author insists but which are bound to escape the audience. Some of the directions given are frankly impracticable : at the close of Act III, Scene II, of « A Family Man », Builder's face is « injected with blood » ; add to this that he is leaning out of a window looking off the stage, with his back therefore turned to the audience, and the absurdity of the thing becomes obvious. It would require a gifted actress indeed to « get across » such non-scenic business as Peachey « selecting a finger », when she pretends to prick herself (« Joy », Act I) ; while the fact that Wellwyn on his first entrance in « The Pigeon » is smoking a hand-made cigarette could not be detected by any audience, unless one furnished with « double million magnifying gas microscopes ». All these directions and comments undoubtedly help the reader to conjure up the scene, but they have no place in the theatre ; and as we go from one play to another, following their chronological order, instances of a similar nature become increasingly numerous, until we feel that Galsworthy has crossed the border separating drama from literary description.

The settings of the plays are in most cases well chosen ; they combine economy and commodity. Galsworthy always endeavoured to reduce changes of scene to a minimum : this is very successfully accomplished in the third act of « Strife », where the action is brought forward by the various entrances of the directors from the room where the deliberations are going on. In « The Eldest Son », the opening scene being laid in the hall of the Cheshire Mansion, we are enabled to make the acquaintance of all the characters easily and naturally, as they pass across on their way to the drawing-room.

Most of the scenery is chosen, like the action, from unsensational life, and it gains greatly from the fact

that the author presents only what he knows best — the country house of the well-to-do ; the upper middle-class household : the lawyer's office, with now and then a court of law ; and, for the sake of contrast, the dwellings of the poor. Yet he is not afraid of the unconventional. The garden in « Joy », with the walled walk and the central tree, the prison corridor in « Justice », were at the time rather novelties. The setting of the auction sale, in « The Skin Game », with the audience being « in effect public and bidders », marked a very interesting departure on a line which has been since followed again and again by modern authors and producers. Galsworthy had no prejudice about the number of doors to be provided in a scene : in the first act of « Justice » there are three, two of them « close together in the centre of the wall » ; there are three doors also in the morning room of the Cheshire house, while in the hall of the same there are four doors, plus a stair-case. In other plays, French windows may replace doors.

Moreover, the setting contains details suggestive of the season, of the place, of the very atmosphere in which the action is going to be unfolded. It may even be said to forward the development by the display of finger-posts, sometimes quite unmistakably : witness the fire in « Strife », and the closed door in the first act of « The Fugitive », on which attention is directed by the hanging curtain. The Tree of Life which holds the centre of the stage in « Joy » is a symbol of the whole play and might, as a matter of fact, provide its title.

But this same Tree is rather overdone as a stage property, and here again we shall find the usual defects which mar certain aspects of Galsworthy's dramatic art — over-emphasis of certain points, and the tendency to stray from drama into literature for print.

Everything goes to show that Galsworthy, in choosing his scenery, kept an eye on the practical possibilities of the stage. In « The Forest », he proposed an economical way of changing the setting (36). Yet, of the

(36) Act III, Sc. 2. In the printed copy of the play the author

scenes in the third act of « Justice », two were certainly not easy to put up, and it is probably for this reason that the author did not tie the producer down by giving too accurate directions ; in the first scene of this act the details provided are of a much more positive nature, but unhappily the directions given cannot be carried out — it is a physical impossibility to show the whole audience, through a window, lines of convicts exercising in a yard some distance away. In the third scene the description of the cell is extremely minute, but it contains items of no scenic value whatever : for instance, the wooden table « on which the novel " Lorna Doone " lies open ». Here Galsworthy the dramatist has once more been led astray by Galsworthy the novelist.

The description of the physical appearance of the characters may be considered as forming part of the settings. A cursory glance would lead us to suppose that there is a good deal of this, but if we look more closely we shall see that such description bears rather upon types, classes, and moods, and that what the playwright actually does is to suggest a general impression. In this he shows judgment and laudable restraint, since he thus leaves some scope for the initiative of the producer and of the actors ; far more so than when he speaks of Strangway's pointed ears, Beatrice Strangway's greenish eyes with lids square above them, or Clipson's « smouldering little dark eyes « behind smoked spectacles ». The costumes, too, are significant either of moods, or of situations, and also, at times, symbolical : the second appearance of Sir William (« The Eldest Son »), in his hunting kit stained with mud is a pictorial representation of the peripety, and one that is not unduly obvious. Galsworthy has a sure eye for costume, and manages, without departing from the verisimilitude necessary in plays of contemporary life, to contrive very decorative effects and to enliven the stage by means of the dressing, despite the limited scope imposed by this class of drama.

provides this footnote : « With the tent gone, entirely different lighting, and a fresh backcloth, the same setting can be used as in the preceding scene, »

We touch here upon his technique of *tableaux*. These he treats throughout as symbols, whether they consist of a protracted gesture or a piece of sculptural grouping further heightened by the decorative sense manifested in the details of his settings. He is particularly fond of a dark mounting of old oak, set off by one splash of bright colour — some piece of costume or a gay flower — which attracts the eye to the centre of action (37). Death scenes, as *tableaux*, are least artistic, because worn out and too easily sensational. The silent aftermath of « The Mob » is in itself a clever invention ; it is marred, however, by the indication that the singing of birds is to be heard « off » : unfortunately, we all know what stage bird-notes are like.

When we open any play of Galsworthy, at any page, we are struck by the number of lines in italics, which means that there is an abundance of information concerning stage business — indications as to tone, facial expressions, changes of attitude and so forth — all this, as we have said, being evidence that Galsworthy, like Bernard Shaw, spared no effort to make his dramas actor-proof (although Bernard Shaw was also guided, in this matter, by other considerations). The majority of the instructions so given, especially in his earlier works, cannot in themselves be taken exception to : brief sketches of gestures and attitudes. But as the author advanced in his dramatic career he displayed an increasing tendency to elaborate these directions and to include in them either lengthy paragraphs of description, comments on his heroes, or explanations as to intentions and motives. The indications sometimes go so far as providing words unspoken in the dialogue : even in « Joy » we find such an instance occurring in Dick's broken line, completed by the italics of the author :

(37) For example, the opening setting of « The Eldest Son » : « The scene is a well-lighted, and large, oak-panelled hall.... and a broad oak staircase.In a huge fireplace a log fire is burning. There are tiger-skins on the floor, horns on the walls.... Freda Studdenham.... in the black dress of a lady's maid, is standing at the foot of the staircase with a bunch of white roses in one hand, and a bunch of yellow roses in the other. »

« He is going to say " hated him too ! " » (38). As to the superfluous comments, their name is legion. Take, for example, the comment in Act III, Sc. I, of « A Bit o' Love » : « As the coat falls, like a body out of which the breath has been squeezed » ; or, in « The Forest », Act II, Sc. III : « The word is Greek to Anima, but his gesture disturbs her » ; and yet again : « Conscious of the disruption of his personality, and withdrawing into her tragic abyss » (« The Pigeon », Act I). All this, of course, is description, not theatre, and we recognize in it the method Shaw developed to an exaggerated degree of giving more and more prominence to prefaces and considerations, moral and social, on the conduct of the characters in his later plays. Some of Galsworthy's directions are just pieces of gratuitous cleverness : « Joy », Act I : « Folding the letter out of her consciousness » ; « Loyalties », Act I, Sc. I : where the butler is described as « running his mind ». On the other hand, the important part played by such instructions is not always realized at once ; only upon second thoughts do we become aware that some of the charm with which the last scene of « A Bit o' Love » is invested is due to the happy choice of words in some of the author's comments : « Tibby... falls back into her *nest of hay*, with her *little shoed feet* just visible » (39).

In all the aspects of the dramas — characters, dialogue, gestures, settings, effects — we find the same qualities of dramatic economy, of power in restraint, and on occasions true artistic delicacy, side by side with crude errors of taste, and with a definite tendency to infringe the rules of the *genre* by crossing the border into written literature. The latter is a grave offence when it results in obscuring the author's sense of theatrical possibilities, or when, distrustful of his own dramatic powers, he relies upon it to supplement action not sufficiently telling in itself. But when purely extraneous and additional to a play already complete without it, the

(38) Act I.

(39) Act I, Sc. 2.

literary infusion bestows a quality of which we are very sensible. Without being in any degree harmful to the simplicity of its line and to its emotional value, it transfigures the drama into something more than a drama, into a play for the library as well as for the stage.

CHAPTER VII

1. COMEDY, SYMBOLISM, POETRY. — 2. « THE PIGEON ». —
3. CURTAIN RAISERS AND EXPERIMENTAL VENTURES.

Galsworthy's naturalistic plays, which make up an important part of his dramatic output, yield, on the whole, a definitely tragic ring. Yet there is hardly one of them where some comic element is not to be found ; not to mention, of course, the comedies proper, such as « The Foundations », or « Windows », where the dominant note is one of amusement, as it is, at times, in « Joy ».

I

Even in a serious drama, Galsworthy will readily bring in comedy for its own sake, or again, resort to some sort of comic relief, when he feels his audience is badly in need of relaxation after tension or after a strong climax. We must not, however, allow ourselves to be deceived by this adjective « comic », for there are some forms of comedy not out of place in a tragic atmosphere. There is irony akin to despair, there is a pessimistic form of cynicism or humour, devoid of all light-heartedness, both of them restrained in expression and in effect. There are also all the incongruities that we notice in life and are prone to regard as burlesque : a noble soul reduced to a paltry existence ; a great truth

clothed in colloquial speech. On all these sources of mitigated comedy of a higher class, Galsworthy occasionally draws. Unfortunately perhaps, he more often relies on cruder materials. We can only deplore that he somewhat indiscriminately indulges in horse-play where his young people are concerned, as in the scene between Joy, Dick and Peachey, in the first act of « Joy ». This particular incident, however, like the skirmish between Dot and Joan in the opening scene of « The Eldest Son », has the merit of being soon over, whereas the romping of Jock and Phyllis in « Old English » is long drawn out (1). Some of the character-parts are not far removed from downright caricature. Many people will regret that whole scenes of that excellent play « Justice » are, to their taste, marred by the undue prominence given to the foibles of Cokeson, as an old bachelor much concerned about his meals, or as a farcical witness. The endless repetition of the nut-cracker incident, in « The Silver Box » — a very cheap effect — is out of tone with the rest of the play (2).

And now we come to the comic dialogue, of which there is not a little in the serious dramas of Galsworthy. A few examples will best illustrate its qualities and its short-comings. Some good effects are obtained with mere humorous wording, in which we recognize « *mots de situation* » and probably the influence, unconsciously felt, of Oscar Wilde : there are certain gems which fall from the lips of that delightful person, Margaret Orme, in « Loyalties » (3) ; or a sentence like the

(1) Acts I and II.

(2) Act I, Sc. 2.

(3) Act I, Sc. 2 :

« Winsor. — Did you hear anything ?

Margaret. — Only little Ferdy splashing.

Winsor. — And see nothing ?

Margaret. — Not even that, alas ! »

And further on, in the same scene, when Winsor, still speaking of De Levis, says : « ...He'd locked his door and taken the key with him. » She comments : « How quaint ! Just like an hotel. Does he put his boots out ? » It is Margaret Orme, moreover, who strikes the keynote of the play in her speech Act II, Sc. 2 : « ...Prejudices, Adela — or are they loyalties — I don't know — criss-cross — we all cut each other's throats from the best of motives. »

following, taken from « Joy » : « I don't believe in husband and wife being separated. That's not my idea of married life » (4). Even in « Strife » we come across terse, sober comedy retorts, as in the first act : the strikers are face to face with the directors, but no one wants to take the initiative ; Roberts contents himself with sarcasm and veiled insults, never getting to the point. Finally, turning to the men : « Well, will you speak, or shall I ? », which provokes Rous's dryly humorous reply : « Speak out, Roberts, or leave it to others ». — The irony may appear in a mere contrast forcibly brought out in the wording : « This prosecution goes very much against the grain with me. I sympathize with the poor », says Barthwick (« The Silver Box », Act II, Sc. II), at the very moment when he plans taking ruthless action against the Joneses. At other times, realistic, photographic speech sets out the burlesque element that lies in ordinary everyday conversation, when among the various interlocutors each pursues his own thoughts, the result being a series of cross questions and crooked answers : the talk at March's breakfast-table (« Windows », Act I), is an example of this. A kindred device, though the trick is a poor one, consists in the literal interpretation of a metaphorical statement, such as Cokeson's answer to Falder : « You have'nt got heart disease ? » (5). In addition to the foregoing, it must be confessed that Galsworthy shrinks before none of the crudest means in order to get a laugh out of the audience : the comic element in the following lines from the opening scene of « Justice » is not of a very high order :

Sweedle : It's a woman.

Cokeson : A lady ?

Sweedle : No, a person,

(4) Act I.

(5) Act IV. He is replying to Falder's speech : « ...They say « I weighed more when I came out than when I went in. They « couldn't weigh me here (*he touches his head*) or here (*he touches his heart and gives a sort of laugh*). Till last night I'd have « thought there was nothing in here at all. »

and the same remark applies to the use of mispronunciation, as Cokeson's « sign qua nonne », in « Justice », or Topping's « pishchological », in « A Family Man ».

It may be claimed for most of the preceding examples, however, that they are at any rate more or less in character. But others have very obviously been added for their own sake, without any consideration for dramatic truth. One of the worst instances of a comic gag introduced into a scene without any rhyme or reason, is the servant's unexpected question to George, in « The Fugitive » (Act I), « Shall I leave the sunset, Sir ? » This is entirely out of tone with the character, though hardly more so than Dick's remark to Rose, in « Joy », when he finds the servant-girl embracing a bottle of champagne : « It's not claret, Rose, I should'n't warm it », which would be all right in the mouth of a sophisticated cynic or of an older man with a drier sense of humour than the earnest, boyish Dick (6). The same character's assurance — « It's quite clean » (7), — as he proffers his handkerchief to Joy, is much too conventional and, indeed, threadbare. Many of the little precocities uttered by children in the various plays miss fire because lacking in spontaneity ; they are too self-conscious not to sound artificial and strike us as having been born in the mind of the author rather than in that of a child. As for Underwood's dig at Scantlebury : « If you can spare one », referring to the loan of a goose-feather pen, in Act I of « Strife », not only is it a piece of gratuitous insult, but — a graver fault — it is not scenic, being too subtle for the audience to grasp its significance in the rapid interchange of the dialogue.

The heavier effects are more acceptable in pure comedies, or, at least, in plays where the comic note definitely predominates. In these, Galsworthy betrays a strong, very English taste for the farcical. No doubt, knock-about farce provides an audience with a very

(6) Act III.

(7) Act II.

primitive form of entertainment : it both distorts superficial realities, and, dealing with situations rather than characters, it often neglects deep-lying human truth. On the other hand, if we admit we go to the theatre simply to be amused, there is not much to be said against a well-managed farcical comedy. It shakes the spectator's nerves, and shows powers of invention on the part of the writer. An artistic design may underlie its external uncouthness. It provides a way of concretizing abstract truth otherwise than in pompous, lifeless allegory. A farcical incident, even in tragedy, placed at a moment of extremely high tension, may bring in the needed hysterical relief by substituting laughter for a flood of tears. It is all a question of invention, tone and harmony. Galsworthy makes the mistake of including exceedingly facile comic pieces of business, running quite counter to our demand for truth, in plays embodying an appeal to a sense of external verisimilitude. Accordingly, our disapprobation of the crude comic and satirical element in « *Hall-Marked* » is in direct ratio to the realistic basis on which this little drama rests. « *Windows* » shows a very ill-judged mixture of sober seriousness, and of heavy burlesque : the scene where John barricades himself in upon the landing (8), the symbolical figure of the window-cleaner, undoubtedly clash with the more sedate, psychological and naturalistic note struck elsewhere. On the other hand, equal or greater heaviness of touch is nowise resented in « *The Foundations* », for instance, on account of the general tone of deliberate burlesque that prevails in this quaint comedy, and also because of the impression it manages to produce that its exaggerations are the result of a general simplification of lines, of the same artistic device that gives some of its charm to a puppet show (9).

(8) Act II.

(9) Most reminiscent of the puppet show is the *tableau* on which the curtain is dropped at the end of Act I of « *The Foundations* ». In their cellar where the action has taken place, Lord and Lady William Dromondy, too dirty to approach each other very closely, stiffen in a burlesque attitude thus described in the stage directions : « They stand about a yard apart, and bending their faces towards each other, kiss on the lips. »

However, although burlesque incidents will occur sometimes in his naturalistic dramas, and fairly frequently in his symbolical plays, Galsworthy hardly ever manages a steady, well-supplied flow of them. Apparently he lacked the vigour of invention that would have enabled him to write a proper farce, with a ceaseless sequence of laughable situations evolving from one another. Most of his comedies suffer from the fact that the external plots are thin. Not comedies of characters or of manners, since the persons figure in them as embodiments of simple ideas and attitudes, and since the presence of a fanciful element leaves little room for realistic external observations, they are strongly flavoured with a Shavian quality. The action in them is mainly a pretext for clever, satirical dialogue on a social question, a dialogue not always as light as we might wish. This action appeals to the spectator's elementary curiosity, rather than to more complex excitement; frequently, some rather uninteresting enigma is dangled before his eyes, the solution of which is withheld from him by factors external to the story; in « The Foundations », indeed, the riddle is hardly solved at all, and we are left guessing; paradoxically enough, the heroes of the play are, in this case, better informed than the public. All this, of course, does not make for genuine concern in the fate of the characters, nor for the subtle enjoyment that an audience may derive from occupying an Olympian coign of vantage.

With « The Little Man », the theme, subject and plot are one, being the contrast between the words and acts of many people who « talk big » and « behave small », if we may so style it, in presence of danger or mere inconvenience. The treatment is avowedly, and very successfully, caricatural, with a nice touch of sincere pathos. The *dramatis personæ* are presented as national types, or rather as various national opinions concerning the treatment of the weaker members of society; and there is something burlesque in the very exchange of remarks in different languages, including American, as well as in the exaggerated reactions to the imagined

situation. By the way, we do not very well understand why Austrian officials should address other Austrian officials in English with a strong German accent !

Even admitting that, in Galsworthy's comedies, crude farcical effects may not, as a principle, be objected to, the fact remains that many will cavil at the author's questionable sense of humour as displayed in the choice and working of these effects. In « *The Foundations* » the satire on the Press is so broad that it must fail in its object, and, notwithstanding the general character of the play, will shock the taste even of not over-fastidious audiences. The bare idea of drains — witness the play just referred to — or of unpleasant smells, as in « *Hall-Marked* », appears to amuse Galsworthy vastly, since he draws upon it so freely and so copiously enlarges upon it for his comic effects and in his dialogue. In « *The Foundations* » again, the speech of Poulder to the Press on the subject of wine is too complacently developed (10): as a matter of fact, the author seems to consider that the very act of imbibing liquids is essentially funny in itself, and he appears convinced that he is reaching great comic heights whenever he can introduce and underline this gesture in a scene, or, indeed, deal with drink in any way. In « *Joy* », a serving-maid is shown dancing with a bottle of champagne (11): of course an explosion of long repressed vitality; but was the bottle necessary? Or does it stand symbolically for all the hectic pleasures of the purple life? Professor Gilbert Murray complained that in the first version of « *The Pigeon* » glasses of rum really figured too prominently (12). Lack of taste descends even to coarseness in

(10) Act I. It begins: « While we're waiting for Lord William — if you're interested in wine.... » and goes on for some two hundred words commenting on the various wines in the adjacent blms. It is not a very wise or witty speech, and is too obviously put in to fill up the time, as Poulder says, « while we're waiting for Lord William ».

(11) Act II.

(12) See his letter of October 8, 1911, and Galsworthy's reply two days later. As a whole, Professor Gilbert Murray did not seem to appreciate « *The Pigeon* » (perhaps because he read it as a serious, naturalistic play). « But somehow, *The Pigeon* does not seem to me to be up to your standard... » (Marror, pp. 327-8-9).

the scenes of drunkenness : the author does not hesitate to bring a drunken man on the stage, and, in « Windows », what is still more unpalatable, a tipsy gentlewoman (13).

As a whole, he does not show at his best when handling comedy. At such times he too often appears devoid of the very qualities that give very great value to so many of his other effects : under-statement in expression and reliance upon psychological truth rather than physical gesticulation. We cannot for a moment admit that Galsworthy was for once pandering to the lowest tastes of the lowest portion of his public : all his literary career is too great a proof of artistic honesty for us to harbour such a suspicion. It must therefore be supposed that when comedy was not mingled with pathos and when it was thus unable to appeal to his more delicate sensibilities, he had nothing better than a schoolboy's notion of humour and just stopped short of jokes about cross-eyed men, mothers-in-law and sea-sickness.

In his comedies, though, the fanciful element occasionally does much to help down the burlesque ; seeing that they are also concerned, as a rule, with some social and philosophical question, it almost of necessity ensues that they deal in symbols. Likewise, it has been mentioned that even in naturalistic dramas, the symbolical value of incidents and characters has to be taken into account (14). In such unclassifiable plays as « Joy », « Windows » and « A Bit o' Love » symbolism

(13) Act III.

(14) And so it sometimes is with the proper names. « Characteristic without eccentricity -- that is what a name ought to be », says William Archer (*Play-making*, p. 62), except, of course, in farcical, eccentric plays. With Galsworthy, even in naturalistic plays, some of the proper names are painfully laboured, halfway between the moral symbols of the eighteenth century comedy, and elementary puns. Here again appears the writer's propensity to heavy underlining, when suggesting should be enough. For example, the two surnames in « The Skin Game » -- Hillerist (the county family), and Hornblower (the arrogant self-assertive *parvenu*) ; the Dedmonds in « The Fugitive » ; De Levis in « Loyalties ». The name given on two occasions to a lawyer may also be mentioned -- Twisden ; it occurs in « The Fugitive » and in « Loyalties ».

figures largely. On it, moreover, are built almost entirely two short poetic plays, « Punch and Go » and « The Little Dream ». « Punch and Go » is a curious mixture, where a satire on the stage itself encloses a little domestic scene, and the latter, in its turn, something like a short satyr play, a diminutive poetic drama about Orpheus, which is, as it were, the central kernel. It looks most insignificant, and we, for our part, cannot but agree with one of the characters, the theatre proprietor, that it hardly deserves staging. A playwright needs more, or something other than what Galsworthy has in his power to give us, if he is to dispense altogether with « punch and go ». The story of the Professor who lives in his books and does not satisfy his young wife's aspirations towards Life (with a capital L), has been done again and again. The satirical comedy is the best, with its ingenious settings and with its appeal to technical curiosity interested in the actual staging of a play ; moreover, the point is here well brought out, although the plot strikes us as somewhat thin.

« The Little Dream » is nothing but the poetic representation, through symbolism, of a philosophy of life, and the author declared himself well pleased with it. But Galsworthy lacked the very personal charm of Barrie, and, as a poet, had a heavy touch. « The Little Dream », with its settings of a Tyrolese operetta, its veiled figures and personified mountains, themselves voicing the attraction of simple natural life, the lure of the City and a vague formula of inclusiveness, fails to grip us. It is too elaborate for a philosophy too obvious, and for a very arbitrary conclusion. We do not feel here the presence of the forces and mysteries of Nature. It would have taken a great poet to treat it adequately : Galsworthy, if a clever dramatist, was not a great poet ; he succeeded best in what he called « naturalism ». And here we find none of the solid realism that, with the Irish theatre, gives symbolism its substance. Besides, « The Little Dream » is a succession of three *tableaux*, with no internal movement in them, no steady evolution through a crisis, no sense of psychological necessity, no

great power of dramatic emotion. We cannot but rejoice that its author did not renew this attempt in the field of poetic drama.

In several plays, Galsworthy attempted, as it seems, to include diverse elements that Dramatic Art considered, at one or another moment, as contradictory : naturalism and poetry, realism and symbolism, tragedy and farce. In « Joy » a fairly happy synthesis is achieved ; in « Windows » and in « A Bit o' Love », many unfortunate false notes jar upon our aesthetic susceptibilities ; among all, « The Pigeon » stands out, considered from this angle, as an almost complete, unqualified success.

II

« The Pigeon » is a drama, farcical and sentimental, the tragi-comedy of ineffectual good intentions. The whole action takes place around a central figure, almost always present on the stage : that of Wellwyn, an artist, incapable of resisting an appeal to charity. His pocket is one big hole, through which his resources run away from him in an uninterrupted stream ; he gives his card to any derelict he meets in the street ; and as his *protégés* show little scruple in making use of his inexhaustible bounty, his house always stands in danger of being transformed into a hospital for waifs. This is what happens on a wet Christmas Day, when a flower-girl, Mrs Megan, afflicted with a gambling husband and with her own irresponsibility, an artistically and philosophically-minded vagabond, Ferrand, and a drunken cabman, Timson, meet in his studio, the three of them seeking for his proffered help and protection. Wellwyn, the Pigeon, at first uncomfortable, for his affectionate daughter Ann has just warned him against his habit of indiscriminate charity, soon yields again to his incurable good nature, entertains his guests with tea and rum, gives them dry clothes, and offers them the shelter of his roof for the night. Left alone in the studio, the three make the most of their opportunity ;

while Timson remains seated near the fire, in a state of drunken stupor broken with short intervals of half-consciousness, Mrs Megan and Ferrand quickly come to an understanding that shows that the flower-girl's husband, though he be a sinner, is also sinned against. Notwithstanding Ann's opposition, the three of them have, by New Year's Day, made a habit of visiting the hospitable house ; Timson to clean Wellwyn's brushes and drink his rum, Mrs Megan to pose as a model, Ferrand to philosophize, the latter two to carry on behind their protector's back, and each and all to get money whenever it is available. Three philanthropists, a Vicar, a Professor, and a J.P., are also guests the same day in the studio. They dispute about different forms of private and public charity ; they cross-examine and study the three concrete cases before them. The highly moral Vicar in vain tries to reconcile Mrs Megan with her husband ; but Mr Megan, who has unfortunately witnessed through the window some of his wife's goings-on, and is confirmed in his opposition by Timson's burlesque, thick-voiced testimony, refuses to be mollified. Having failed in this first attempt, the Vicar decides to find some employment for Mrs Megan in domestic service. The cahman departs, but soon afterwards is found by a policeman, dead-drunk across the door-step ; he is promptly « jugged ». Ferrand disappears. Three months later, on the first of April, Wellwyn is getting ready to leave his ground-floor studio ; to protect him from benefactors and « benefacted », Ann is taking him to a flat on the seventh storey of a building in a remote part of the town. Between two journeys of the furniture removers, the derelicts re-appear. Ferrand, it transpires, has been ill in hospital but has now been set shakily upon his feet ; Timson, after several short periods in jail, has tried to find death by sitting down in the middle of the road before a brewer's dray, but has been forcibly prevented from accomplishing his purpose ; Mrs Megan has left her « place » and gone on the streets. She now overhears from the door-step part of a philosophical dialogue between Ferrand and the

Pigeon ; its effect is to send her running back to the Thames to make a hole in the water, whence she is fished out and brought to the studio prior to being taken to the police station on a charge of attempted suicide. When Wellwyn finally leaves for his new abode, the situation of his three *protégés* is unchanged, except for the worse — all philanthropic systems have failed ; he himself, if we judge from the amount of tips he gives to the furniture removers and the number of visiting cards he is leaving scattered behind him, is unchanged too, and Ann is far from having triumphed over her incorrigible father.

The subject of the play is the powerlessness of all organized forms of philanthropy in the presence of some forms of distress ; their rules take no heed of individuals and fail accordingly ; even private charity, dictated by the purest motives of human sympathy and understanding can only bring about momentary relief and questionable good. And thus the theme probes deeper and deeper into the social problems. What is to be done with people such as Tinson, Mrs Megan and her husband, Ferrand and... Wellwyn ? They are irrepressible, weak-willed, undisciplined and inadaptable. The philanthropists, the good-natured policeman, the three vagabonds themselves recognize that for exceptional individuals, if not in possession of a substantial banking account, death is the only solution. Yet society, with her hospitals, jails and reformatories, insists on keeping them alive, and the law punishes self-slaughter. No answer is suggested by the playwright, except that Wellwyn's unquestioning, indiscriminate and, on the whole, useless charity is the only possible attitude. This is utter pessimism indeed, this recognition of the ultimate failure of all good intentions : a real nightmare.

This theme, the problem of the inadaptable in the organized social body, already approached in other plays, « The Fugitive » and « Windows », for example, is here treated with remarkable skill, with a lightness of touch that unexpectedly turns it into material for

delicate pathos and excellent comedy. These two qualities, that would risk clashing with each other in a piece of work not so well balanced, here go practically hand in hand. The three vagabonds who might so easily have been made into pretexts for maudlin sentimentality, or into farcical figures of fun merely bent on playing jokes upon their would-be helpers, exhibit a delightful mixture of irrepressible naughtiness and genuine feeling. There is some measure of loyalty even in the old drunkard. Mrs Megan's very readiness to adopt any attitude expected from her, and to change at a second's notice from sauciness to an expression of submissive humility, is suggestive of a life spent under social oppression, as well as of female duplicity. And Ferrand's quick variations from cynicism to emotion, from humbug to human sympathy, the whole encased in highly cultured and courtly language studded with gallicisms, picturesque sayings and philosophical comments, hang halfway between burlesque and sentiment, between jesting and serious discussion, without our being able, at any moment, to determine how far he is sincere and in what measure he is making fun of others, of life, and of himself (15). Wellwyn, the willing Pigeon, is not unaware of his *protégés'* unscrupulous misdoings ; or of his own weakness ; he feels at once aggrieved and slightly amused (for he has a sense of humour) at the part he is made to play ; and underlying his critical judgment, his profound love for, and interest in, humanity (not something abstract, but the common condition of living individual creatures), provide the permanent motive of his actions. He is drawn to the

(15) This, of course, is a thoroughly English attitude before life, that of the humorist, who can appreciate the incongruity of a situation however closely he himself may be involved in it, and without any expression of his personal reactions to it (sentimental or moral), still less of a judgment or of a comment. The wonder is that with it all, Ferrand remains so romantically and charmingly « French », free from all stodginess, sprightly, wittily fluttering from one to another subject, cynical, and amused, and full of diverting sayings in this quaint speech of his own. Whether this romantic bohemian, this « Frenchy-ism », are representative of a national temperament as it appears in real life, is quite another story.

various waifs and strays whom he picks up in the streets, because he is, at bottom, one of their sort ; they know it ; Ferrand tells him so ; no offence is meant in the dubious compliment, and no offence is taken. Ann herself is not out of the picture ; for all her exasperation and for all her unavailing efforts, she understands ; she has no illusions about all the « rotters » with whom her father fills her house and to whom he distributes her clothes ; and the rotters themselves would agree with her, and anyhow cannot resent her perfectly justified attitude. This pervading atmosphere of indulgence and sympathy together with the two very attractive personalities (so much alike) of Ferrand and Wellwyn, gives the picture its charm. Everybody understands everybody else, and, except for Timson's moments of perverseness, there is no ill blood between them. Everybody takes or leaves the others *as they are*, — and this is one of the lessons of the play.

The undecisiveness of the characters makes them quite convincing. Much scope is left for our imagination to complete them and to fill in what is left unsaid, yet suggested. Their picture is pruned of all that would be irrelevant to the drama ; and yet, such as they are, they wear the colour of true human emotion, with its indefinite shades and subtle variations. This is the more striking as they are partly the issue of an intellectual frolic ; we feel their creator's fancy at play about them ; and for all their human appeal, these are symbolical figures. Wellwyn and his three « orphans of the storm » are not only individuals momentarily brought together by a most likely coincidence in time ; they are also social cases, and they represent the several aspects of one problem. Still more markedly is it so with the three social reformers, each of them the rigid embodiment of a particular system. The incidents, too, are significant and representative, — not only the peak adventures in the characters' lives, but all the minor ups and downs of the stage-action. This sentimental comedy is also a symbolical drama. Symbolical are the three moments chosen for the three acts (Christmas, New

Year and All Fools' Day), the reformer climbing on a chair to peer at the drunken creature he feels called upon to rescue and improve, and the often-quoted episode when two of the philanthropists, going out after a heated dispute over their rival theories, are rudely brought down into the world of reality by both falling over the body of the unsolved individual « case », lying incapable outside the door.

Every form of comedy is to be found in this play, from the most restrained, dry humour, to farce, though none of it gives offence even to fastidious taste. *Mots de caractère* and *mots de situation* are many; chiefly on the lips of Wellwyn and of Ferrand, the latter enhancing their value with his mannerisms and very formal style, in contrast with his social position and disreputable appearance. « It was time that I consolidated my fortunes, Monsieur » (16) is certainly a quite unexpected way to describe the motives of his visit to his protector. And the sentence: « Sometimes I think that I will never succeed to dominate my life, Monsieur » (17), manages to enclose the gist of a situation, the definition of a great, pathetic piece of human truth in delightful burlesque. The figures of the three amusing humbugs, unscrupulous and at times so genuinely kind, lending themselves to the reformers' inspection and half-conscious that, they being what they are, all efforts to rescue them must meet with failure, supply an inexhaustible source of wistful laughter. And the paradox of their occasionally striking a highly moral attitude provides us with a more mischievous form of amusement.

In the succession of situations and incidents the comic effects are cleverly managed and renewed. Mere repetition of them with trifling variations greatly enhances their value. The recurrence of an event, of a gesture, of a piece of stage business, of a sentence in the dialogue, in slightly different circumstances, is an excellent prescription for raising a laugh: each fresh happening

(16) Act I.

(17) Act I.

seems to gain by the audience's recollection of what preceded and by the anticipation of further burlesque accumulation. The best example is the arrival in Wellwyn's studio of Mrs Megan, then of Ferrand and, lastly, of Timson, all coming close upon Ann's severe lecture to her father about his unreasonable benevolence (18). The three callers are different, yet so alike ; the three entrances are contrived in much the same fashion, yet they vary in minor details ; the dialogue that follows the three arrivals sounds like iterations of the same sentences, yet it is not merely that. Expectation and surprise, intellectual pleasure at this clever handling of a repeated situation, conspire to make us forget, in light-hearted laughter, all cavilling about the likelihood of such coincidences. Elsewhere, an exaggerated forecast unexpectedly comes true : shortly after Ann has wondered how her father has not already parted with his trousers to clothe one of his vagabonds, and before even we have had time to realize whereto we are being taken, through a quick, quite acceptable concourse of circumstances, lo ! the extraordinary thing has come to pass ; and we laugh at the paradox and we admire the way the trick has been done (19). Critical, intellectual appreciation sharpens in all these cases our enjoyment of this comedy, which is raised far above the

(18) Act I. Ann retires, leaving her father reflecting upon her words. A knock is heard and Wellwyn opens the street door to find Mrs Megan in a woeful state, hoping for succour — succour which Wellwyn provides, though with misgivings. Having found her dry clothing (it is a snowy night), he makes her up a bed in the model's room. This waif disposed of, Wellwyn reopens the street door to quiet his scruples by again sampling the severity of the weather. There on the step stands, to his horror, another ragged figure. This time it is Ferrand. His engaging frankness and trust in Wellwyn's understanding sympathy are too much for the unlucky painter, who eventually fits out the dilapidated young man in warm garments of his own. Ferrand withdraws to change his raiment ; Wellwyn goes to the window to draw the curtains and recoils in dismay. Someone taps on the pane and, despite gestures of dismissal, continues tapping. Reluctantly Wellwyn admits this person : it is Timson, drenched to the bone and dazed with liquor and cold. Wellwyn's pity will not allow him to drive even this problematic angel from his door : Timson and Ferrand gather round the studio fire, where Mrs Megan joins them, and the picture is complete.

(19) Act I. Wellwyn divests himself of his nether garments to equip Ferrand, who is wet through and suffering from rheumatism.

level of the knock-about farce. When broad farce occurs, as it does, with all the episodes of rum-drinking, and ragging, and violent disputes, grotesque physical accidents fatal to the dignity of some pompous character, and with the place accorded to staggering paradox — we do not feel it to be out of tone. And the reason of it is the transparent symbolism, which makes such comicality acceptable as part of an intellectual exercise, admitting of logical caricaturing, crudely significant gestures, and magnified effects.

In none of Galsworthy's plays are so many contradictions so happily resolved; in none does careful composition result in such an appearance of fanciful spontaneousness. The pattern of the plot is that of the majority of the plays; in this comedy of characters enlivened by a rapid succession of incidents, the several lines of action connected with the several characters eventually meet and intermingle round the central figure and central concerns of Wellwyn, the unifying element; this design recurs in the three acts. Each act is most neatly divided into very distinct scene-elements, working up towards their separate climaxes and short commentative anti-climaxes, towards the peaks of the acts themselves. The first two pages are models of concentrated and lively exposition; thanks to the diversity of the characters and to the *tempo* of the scenes, the dialogue is, as a whole, crisp and varied, full of feeling and of humour. If it lags for a moment, in a piece of didactic discussion where too much is explicitly pointed out, some peculiarly nonsensical event soon comes to sweep away all recollection of this lapse into formal seriousness (20). If the preparation of a

(20) In his comments before Wellwyn's picture, Act II, Ferrand becomes momentarily serious and (perhaps) sincere; but his mood quickly changes when little Mrs Megan mischievously provokes him. In Act III, after Mrs Megan's attempted suicide, the intolerable pathos is fittingly alleviated by her remark about the policeman's cloak: « I want to take this off. It looks so funny ». It is exactly in keeping with her inconsequence, and touches us even while it makes us smile, thus producing an April-like effect of laughter and tears which causes the tension to relax, without destroying the general tone of this scene. It is an instance of a necessary discharge of feeling most happily

scene, if the underlining of a symbol show with rather needless obviousness, they do not offend ; the accepted caricaturing style of the whole carries everything along with it. The novel-like descriptive accuracy of the stage directions in the printed version of « The Pigeon » takes away nothing of the very scenic quality of this happily balanced tragi-comedy, which, among the major dramas of its author, stands apart, alone of its kind, humorous and pathetic, successfully handled, and invested with that rare, precious, elusive quality : charm.

III

After the first four years of his dramatic career, Galsworthy from time to time composed a few one act plays, comedies and others ; also, in 1923, 1924 and 1926 he definitely attempted some experiments in drama-writing with « The Forest », « Escape » and « The Roof ».

In all the shorter plays, being cramped for space still more than in his other works, Galsworthy has to make use of too concentrated and too explicit dialogue, of over-transparent symbols, whose significance is too heavily underlined, and of tricks too often repeated. Some minor details in their staging seem difficult to realize : thus, the prominent rôles assigned to the two dogs in « Hall-Marked » may, on the stage, result in accidents. As a matter of fact, the playwright would appear to have here worried less than usual about what is or is not scenic, and to have meant, before everything, to be read. And, as a whole, the one act dramas bring nothing new into their author's habitual technique. They are divided into scenes, which are in reality diminutive kinds of acts, since radical changes of place

contrived. In the same way, the last incident of Act III, where Wellwyn plays a harmless little joke upon the furniture removers, immediately corrects the rather solemn impression left by his last words to Ann : « Ann. It is stronger than me », thus restoring the comedy atmosphere of the play and sending the audience home in good spirits.

and varying lapses of time may be marked by the drop of the curtain, and the scene may contain a complete phase of the action. In « The First and the Last », incidents are plentiful and follow one another rapidly. The rhythm of effects is extremely quick and almost every sentence is a significant finger-post ; every point is plainly brought out and emphasized, lack of elbow-room precluding slow graduation. For the same reason, that too abundant physical substance is accumulated in too narrow a frame, the usual parallels and contrasts appear particularly artificial and the story melodramatic. In theme, subject and plot, moreover, this play is a medley of quite a lot that has been already met with in previous works. We seem to catch in it echoes of « The Silver Box », « Justice », « The Fugitive » and « The Pigeon » (21). At the same time, there is one excellent detail which deserves mention, as a most effective piece of melodrama : it is the policeman's step heard as he paces up and down outside the door, a reminder of impending Fate. The piece includes a strong beginning, a first-rate false climax (Scene II, between Keith and Wanda) (22), and a double-barrelled *dénouement*, the second part of which might, if taken less precipitately and preceded by more leisurely preparation, provide at the conclusion of the drama an admirable and welcome renewal of the interest.

While « The First and the Last » is an overcrowded drama condensed into three scenes, « Defeat » is a *tableau* of life, with dialogue in the nature of a double confession full of genuine pathos, but with no dramatic movement. Not much paving of the way is needed for a

(21) « The First and the Last » was written in November 1914. Galsworthy wrote « The Silver Box » in 1906, « Justice » in 1909, « The Fugitive » and « The Pigeon » in 1911.

(22) Keith Darrant, under cover of night, has come to see Wanda ; it is essential to his plans that he should not be recognized by any third person. He is just about to leave when a knock is heard. As no one ever comes to Wanda's rooms, except Larry Darrant, whose key Keith has borrowed, both are considerably alarmed. Wanda turns out the light and peers through a barely opened door : it is a policeman ; but he has only come to tell her that her front door has been left open, and he leaves without entering the room.

climax provoked by the cries of newspaper-boys off-stage, and manifested by a violent outburst of passionate anger, almost a revulsion of feeling. The episode occurs during the war of 1914-18 ; there are two characters only, The Girl, a prostitute, and The Officer, her customer. There is one dramatic effect proper — and a very satisfactory one, too. The Girl calls herself a Russian, but we realize that this is a subterfuge ; when, in due course, comes the long foreshadowed revelation of the truth, the young officer receives it, not with the grandiloquent utterances that the traditions of the stage might have taught us to expect, but with the most natural unconcern, opening on great psychological depths : « I am not Rooshian at all. I am German » she says. — « My dear girl, who cares ?... » is his reply. This rings truer than many a speech either on the wickedness of war, or on the moral beauty of some of its aspects.

« The Sun », another minor tragedy, or comedy, also connected with the 1914-1918 conflagration, is an elaboration not even on a situation, but on an abstract idea, with three characters who represent not three personalities, but three attitudes. Galsworthy called it « A Scene ». It is hardly even that.

Some references to the three principal experimental plays have already been made in the course of this study. Indeed, in spite of his evident intention to break away from his traditional technique, Galsworthy clings, in these, to many of his usual devices. It looks as though he had become, in minor points of method, unable to free himself from some of his habits in dramatic composition.

In « The Forest », however, he seems to challenge orthodox judgments by playing havoc with some exigencies of internal as well as external unity. True, the title is symbolical, suggesting an abode of wild beasts and barbaric tribes, and the play is designed to draw a parallel between the jungle proper and the City, the jungle of ruthless financiers, red, metaphorically, in tooth and claw. But the episodes of the play, the

scenery, the characters, fall into two distinct groups, so that beyond the parallelism and the fact that some figures of the second group find themselves where they do through the machinations of certain persons of the first group, there is nothing to connect them. The first act introduces us to Adrian Bastaple, a financial power in the City of London. He possesses all the characteristics which tradition and the stage attribute to men who handle millions : he is cool, calculating and unscrupulous ; vaguely Jewish in appearance ; and smokes the cigar without which no financier is complete. He has brought together various influential persons to discuss a scheme for sending an expedition to the Eastern Congo, ostensibly to enquire into conditions of the slave trade there. In reality, everyone present, saving a journalist, Tregay, who views the City and its ways with suspicion, has a reason of his own for helping to finance such an expedition, though they do not all state these reasons frankly. With Bastaple, the secret object is money, and big money at that. His manœuvres are so involved and there is so much « double crossing » in the whole transaction, that it is difficult to follow all that is being planned, even when reading the play ; in the theatre it would be wellnigh impossible, save that the spectator would receive a general impression of unscrupulousness and self-seeking, which is probably all that really matters. Acts II and III are laid in « darkest Africa », where we meet an elephant hunter, Samway, and the explorer, Strood, who represents the mission organized by London, as well as other members of the expedition, a naturalist, Herrick, who joins them, and a few natives of warlike propensities. In these two middle acts, the plotting and counter-plotting are quite as complicated as in the first. The unfortunate Strood, besides having to cope with the ordinary difficulties met by the traveller in those dangerous parts, is further hampered owing to the caprices of a native girl, Amina, who is consumed by a violent passion for Herrick, causing her to regard all other members of the party with hostility. Unluckily, the presence of this young

lady is indispensable to the safe conduct of the mission across a certain tract of country. In the end, disease and treachery get the better of Strood and his companions : the last scene of Act III is a hand to hand fight with the savages, in which Strood and Herrick are killed. In Act IV we return to Bastaple's office. News of Strood's tragedy has reached London. Tregay, the journalist, who has all along « smelt a rat » in the whole business, does not hold his tongue and certain personages who appeared in Act I now reappear to demand explanations from the financier. Bastaple, however, is cleverer than his accusers : they lack tangible proof against him, whatever may be their suspicions ; and in the meantime he has contrived to enrich himself by several thousands of pounds thanks to this African expedition.

The characters in this drama are not carefully probed and analyzed for us : rather are we shown the only aspect of them that is required for this particular action. Apart from this we know nothing of them : it is as though, in the tangle of the Forest, these figures hurtle against us for a moment and pass on. By the way, this is the only play in which its author takes us so far afield, for once deserting the quieter scenes of our Western civilization, to plunge into a region of lawlessness and savagery. It is to be questioned whether, in so doing, he has added greatly to his own reputation as a dramatist. There is nothing very arresting in « The Forest », either as a whole or in its details : in the second act, the insistent noise of the tom-tom is admirable in its way, but it reminds one irresistibly of the device used by Somerset Maugham in « Rain », and by Eugene O'Neil in « Emperor Jones » (23) — a device, in both cases, designed to create an atmosphere and to oppress the audience with a sense of obsession. But this, when all is said and done, is only a trick, and not a new one. Eugene O'Neil's use of the stream of

(23) The date of « The Forest » was 1922 ; Somerset Maugham's « Rain » appeared (as a short story) in 1921 and « Emperor Jones » was first played in 1920.

consciousness for dramatic purposes is a much more striking and important contribution to the development of the new drama, and Galsworthy does not resort to it either in « The Forest » or in his other plays. « The Forest » owes much to the technique of the cinematographic art, by the standards of which the limitations of time and space and the necessity for some architectural development of a plot matter less than the plastic value of a subject, the beauty and the suggestive power of the images, together with their harmony and with their rhythm, where lies the subtle unity of a film. So, too, do « Escape » and « The Roof ».

« Escape » is in two parts, made up as has been said, of nine episodes preceded by a prologue, the author having discarded the usual division into acts and scenes. The central figure of the drama is Matt Denant, a young man of education and independent means, who, in a chivalrous attempt to protect a prostitute from police interference, unfortunately causes the death of a constable. This incident constitutes the prologue. We next find Denant in a convict prison, where he is serving a sentence of five years for manslaughter. Under cover of heavy fog he contrives to make his escape and the succeeding scenes of the play show him at different stages of the fifty odd hours of liberty which he manages to snatch before his re-arrest. In his efforts to evade his pursuers, he encounters a variety of persons, all of whom remain anonymous ; these include a Shingled Lady at an hotel, whose brother, as it turns out, was at school with Denant ; a benevolent Elderly Gentleman ; a group of trippers, picnicking ; labourers at a gravel pit ; two maiden ladies having tea in their parlour ; and, finally, the village Parson, in the vestry of whose church the re-arrest takes place, despite the clergyman's attempts to conceal the whereabouts of the fugitive. Denant's contact with each of them is very brief, but sufficient to show us their respective reactions to his presence ; all either know or guess who and what he is. In the end it is Denant that gives himself up, in a gallant gesture by which he preserves the honour of the Parson. In so

doing, he points the moral of the drama, if moral the author intended, inasmuch as he demonstrates that though a man may extricate himself from adverse situations and escape from manifold and great dangers, from himself he cannot escape. The play, which became immediately a popular favourite, aroused some controversy among its admirers on the very question of its hidden « meaning », and Galsworthy was called upon more than once to vouchsafe some explanation on the subject. It was about « Escape », that, in a letter to an American correspondent (July 19th, 1927) he said : «the author..... begins with an incident leading to « other incidents, and with a character leading to other « characters. Having these..... he invests them with as « much life as their variety, as his own temperament..... « and his knowledge of humanity at large permits. He « does not set out to clothe an idea, a purpose, an « allegory. The play may give off ideas, it may suggest « much ; but that is because human life and incident « treated by a temperament that has some feeling, « intelligence and philosophy will inevitably suggest « much, and have some final meaning, such as : " We « can't escape from our best selves "..... » ; and to another American, Miss O'Dell, he wrote on November 2nd 1930 : «If you examine the play closely you will « find, I think, that any large generalization..... will « hardly hold water.Each character reacts to Matt « Denant according to the individual circumstances of « his or her life.If I had wanted to draw such a « moral I should have chosen a simple, not a gentle « convict » (24).

« The Roof » (25) ought to be considered as an experiment complementary to the preceding work. Here the unity is unity of place (every *tableau* is set in one room of an hotel except the last, on its roof), and absolute unity of time, all the scenes being supposed to occur simultaneously with the exception of the last.

(24) See MARROT, pp. 602 and 800.

(25) For the analysis of this play, see p. 94, Chap. IV.

This division of the play into *tableaux* is not very dramatic ; it results in no more internal unity of action than we may find in some of the novels of Vicki Baum. But there is much deftness displayed in secondary details, and imagination proves itself successful in varying the different pictures and establishing very slender links between the groups of characters. For instance, in the first scene, laid in the hotel dining-room, the Nurse is having her supper, in the course of which she discusses other residents of the hotel with the waiter Gustave. In this way, we hear about the elderly couple, Mr and Mrs Beeton, who are newcomers. The Nurse's patient is Mr Lennox, a novelist ; he, by repute, is known to the violinist Froba, who also appears in this scene. (Later, in Scene 3, we meet Diana and Bryn, Lennox's daughters, and in Scene 6 Lennox himself and his wife.) Fanning, a young fellow who is seeing life in Paris under the guardianship of Major Moulteney, a friend of his family, makes his entry with two boon companions, Baker and Brice, whom he has collected during his stay ; in the following scene, which takes place in the lounge, he discovers an old acquaintance in the Young Man, of whom we see more in Scene 5. It is evident that he and Fanning move in the same circles in England, for when all the characters meet finally on the roof of the hotel, Fanning also recognizes the Young Woman with whom the Young Man is eloping. Mr and Mrs Beeton know no one, but in Scene 4 the Nurse comes to their room to borrow a hypodermic needle.

It is interesting to notice the way in which the necessary indication of time is given at the beginning of each *tableau* : in the first two scenes, a clock marking the hour is plainly displayed ; in Scenes 3 and 4 the information is conveyed by a question and the reply : « It's just striking eleven » ; in Scene 5 we hear a clock striking the hour as the curtain rises, followed by the comment of the Young Woman, « Eleven ! ». Scene 6 opens with Lennox's speech to his wife : « Look here, my dear. It's eleven. You'd better go to bed ».

The enjoyment derived from the play is mainly

intellectual, for we realize that the author has consciously faced a problem of technique, which was in the nature of a paradox, and has solved it satisfactorily. Something fanciful in the tone and, so to speak, decorative in the general pattern of the drama, partly redeems what may appear factitious and too much broken up in this very peculiar technique.

CONCLUSION

Broadly speaking, it is not the curtain-raisers or the experimental plays, not the comedies or the poetical symbolical dramas, not even « The Pigeon », original and valuable as it is, that we have in mind when we think of Galsworthy as a playwright ; but his naturalistic dramas, such works as « The Silver Box », « Strife », « The Eldest Son », « Loyalties », etc. In number they hardly make up one half of their author's dramatic output ; but they are most representative of what may be called the Galsworthian atmosphere, which is no other than the phantasm of Galsworthy's personality.

A general attitude towards life and its problems, the recurrence of a definite set of qualities and defects repeatedly manifested in many guises, and uncompromising faithfulness to an ideal of philosophical sincerity and artistic conscientiousness are the permanent, outstanding features of this work. Throughout it all, we hear an unmistakable note of profound humanity, sometimes of ironical pity for the tragedy of man's condition. There is revealed to us the author's keen perception of some vices of the social structure, above all in what concerns the treatment meted out by the collective body to its component individuals, and with peculiar sensitiveness to the situation of the unhappily married woman, born of an unconscious idealization of womanhood. Flashes of noble indignation are to be observed at every spectacle of hard-heartedness and deliberate cruelty. And a plea rises from the whole for the liberation of the human unit from the burden of persecution and constraint exercised by society and

aggravated by the tyranny of caste and tradition, class prejudices and class interests.

The presence of a social subject and philosophical theme in Galsworthy's plays invests these with a certain interest beyond that imparted to them by their artistic quality. At the same time, the nature of the author's creed, his sentimental approach to the problems that force themselves upon his attention, his perception of the distressing irony of things, enable him to make excellent dramatic use of his questions and suggestions and to write serious plays that are not lifeless demonstrations, such as we usually label « plays with a purpose » — that is, with a purpose distinct from the artist's.

An artist Galsworthy meant to remain, when all was said and done ; his dramas are strongly built, well supplied with plot and incidents, animated with vigorous action ; at the same time, they are composed according to a style that distinguishes them, at first sight, from the melodramas that so long occupied the English stage. This style is sometimes the outcome of the playwright's natural talents, but often, too, of self-imposed discipline ; it appears in the structure of each drama, in the lucid utilization of all details, in the language. For one thing, Galsworthy's work is undeniably and despite a marked tendency to certain forms of idealization, realistic, not only from the underlying vein of gentle pessimism that entered into the make-up of the writer's personality, but in that he is concerned with the description of psychological effects rather than sensational events, with constant resort to under-expression and with presentation through the occurrences of the *drame bourgeois* ; the whole firmly held together in his plays by the application of the strictest rules of self-imposed artistic economy and symmetry (in plot, development, character, action and dialogue), — heightened in tone by a very sure touch for setting up tension and bringing out strong effects, — generally unhampered by any slavish, conscious compliance to tradition.

Even the defects, no less apparent than the great

technical qualities of this work, are often due to excess of conscientiousness. The plays suffer from too much technique, from too much construction, from being too obviously the application of clear-cut methods. There is too much underlining and explicitness, too little left for sensibility and imagination to grasp by an act of communion of the audience with the author, through sympathy with the actor-character : as though the writer had a poor opinion of his audiences and did not trust their power of apprehension through sensibility and even intelligence. This in itself is already a mistake in taste, incompatible with the very emotional quality of these dramas. Some errors, unfortunately, are more glaring still, making us wonder at the uneven artistic level of Galsworthy's dramatic output, at the uncertainty of his judgment : one is at a loss to account for the very broad appeals to sentimentality, or for what must be termed the writer's crude sense of the comic, often so elementary that its manifestations can hardly be acceptable unless still further exaggerated for symbolical purposes in a few farcical imagination-dramas.

Some of the weaknesses to be discovered here correspond to the author's deep-lying idiosyncrasies and therefore appear in his novels as well as in his dramas : thus, for instance, an unsavoury side to many of his plots, no healthy sensualism but a partiality for maudlin sentimentality and dubious situations where amorous entanglements bring the characters, as it were, on the verge of incest ; some scenes appear weighted with the oppression of their author's possible inhibitions (1). But most of the excesses and lapses from good taste previously quoted are, on the other hand, characteristic of his plays as opposed to his novels, where, as we know, he displayed extreme delicacy of treatment in psycholog-

(1) See above, Chapter II, note 10. This feature of Galsworthy's work is more apparent in his novels than in his plays. Although the latter do not actually take us so near incestuous situations, there is in some of them a very strong suggestion of general unsavouriness. « The Fugitive », « The Mob », « A Bit o' Love », even « Joy », occasionally yield a distinctly unpleasant ring. Already « The Civilised » showed a decided tendency in this direction on the part of the playwright.

ical study and a preference for twilight states of mind. The reason probably is that for this sort of delineation Galsworthy needed a huge canvas, and that, as he admitted, he felt cramped within the limitations of the theatre, a compliance to whose most stringent rules he nevertheless imposed upon himself, by a constant effort of self-discipline. And thus very likely, as a result, out of an excess of artistic scruple (but not stultifying respect for dead conventions), he was prone to reinforce the very rules he felt to be essential in dramatic composition, so laying himself open, occasionally, to the reproach of bareness in his plots and of staginess in the choice and management of effects.

We may often feel that the plots and situations Galsworthy developed, that the technique he applied are not highly original. Although we may fancy we catch, in these dramas, some echoes from the work of previous or contemporary playwrights, we are soon convinced, however, that he never consciously just stole away devices to use them barefacedly to his own advantage : his unimpeachable artistic integrity would, for one thing, have made even petty literary pilfering impossible for him. Never can we, accordingly, speak of downright imitation where he is concerned, but rather of influences and of adaptation to his own purposes (after intelligent assimilation), of some foreign elements of composition which seem to re-appear in his plays after he has ceased to realize the presence of the borrowed devices in among his store of technical means.

That the melodramatic tradition did not leave him untouched is obvious enough from his resorting to previously used strong situations, from his fondness for striking, occasionally physical, effects, even though he hardly ever went to the length of dropping his curtain upon a full climax or a laboriously composed *tableau* (2).

(2) See William Archer : *Play-making* (pp. 250-251). « There
« should be moderation even in this shrinking from theatricality.
« This shrinking is particularly marked, though I do not say it is
« carried too far, in the plays of Mr Galsworthy. Even the most
« innocent tricks of emphasis are to him snares of the Evil One.
« He would sooner die than drop his curtain on a particularly

The influence of the French nineteenth-century drama was, undoubtedly, at work, too, upon him : that of the well-made play, of the play with a purpose, and of the naturalistic play proper. In the firm construction of his scenes and acts, in the minute preparation leading up to the expected development or to the expected climax, also in the use of one or two minor devices, we recognize some of the methods of Scribe and Sardou. All the same, none of his plays produces upon us the same disastrous impression of artificial ingenuity as is gathered from too many *pièces bien faites*. For one thing, Galsworthy is not enslaved to the tradition of the *scène à faire*. Further, he is at perpetual trouble to renew some of his methods. Besides, there are in his plays the above-mentioned suggestion of a philosophy of life (although not a lesson expressed in formal didactic speeches, as with Dumas fils and François de Curel), and the redeeming presence of his unmistakable realism (although it in nowise stands in the way of the continuous action, as sometimes does Becque's naturalism). In short, of all these influences, none is powerful enough to crush down a dramatic personality ; each of them is, all the time, completed and corrected by every other one.

Galsworthy denied again and again that his work had been in any way affected by the Scandinavian drama (3). However, we do not see how he could escape being touched by it indirectly when so many people of his own

« effective line. It is his chief ambition that you should never
 « discern any arrangement, any intention, in his work. As a
 « rule, the only reason you can see for his doing thus or thus is
 « his desire that you should see no reason for it. He does not
 « carry this tendency, as some do, to the point of eccentricity ;
 « but he certainly goes as far as any one should be advised to
 « follow. A little further, and you incur the danger of becoming
 « affectedly unaffected, artificially inartificial. »

(3) See Galsworthy's letter to Dr Sadasiva Aiyar, August 23, 1925 (MARROR, p. 793) : « Though you believe, I think, that all
 « modern English dramatists were influenced consciously or
 « unconsciously by Ibsen — this, I assure you, was not my case.
 « My dramatic invasion, and the form of it, was dictated rather
 « by revolt at the artificial nature of the English play of the
 « period, and by a resolute intention to present real life on the
 « stage. I had never seen an Ibsen play, nor a...., play ; and had
 « been irritated by two or three plays of these masters that I
 « had read. »

circle, including William Archer and Bernard Shaw, so readily entered upon the new ways it opened up. And, judging by his efforts to renew the means of exposition and presentation, by the clever combination he achieved of symbolism, realism, and tragedy, and by the wide social and philosophical import of his *dramas bourgeois* throbbing with intensity, we cannot but suspect that Ibsen's influence had not been so completely wasted upon him, as Galsworthy himself believed. And he was, of course, open to the contagion from the contemporary school of English dramatists, at first mainly Bernard Shaw and Granville Barker, then the authors of plays of imagination and fancy. His more and more lengthy stage directions, with descriptions and comments, the paradoxical, grotesque twist frequently given to his comedies, his leanings towards intellectual farce, not to speak of one or two plays where the situation decidedly serves as an excuse for comic didactic dialogue and for ironical comments on society, bear the unmistakable mark of strong Shavian influence.

Lesser, however, than that of himself upon himself ; we mean that the technique of the novel again and again with Galsworthy exercised an action on that of the drama. When Galsworthy composed one of his plays, his method consisted, so he informed us, in setting up the characters and letting them lead their own lives within the framework of a plot, while reserving possibilities for their natural development ; then, in visualizing the scenes where they spoke and moved according to their various idiosyncracies. The only drawback was that the visualization was done, so to speak, at extremely close range, so that some of the details were lost on an audience. Hence another, probably stronger, reason than mere conformity to the example set by Bernard Shaw, for giving increasing prominence to descriptive stage directions and stage comments. We recognize in them the hand of the novelist. They hardly can be said to weaken the value of the dramatic dialogue to which they are added, rather than substituted for it. So that some of the later plays

really represent a double work of art : a straightforward drama made for the stage, and also an arm-chair drama meant to be read with every one of its details appreciated at leisure.

On the whole, it is in his choice and skilful combination of existing dramatic traditions, apparently irreconcilable, that Galsworthy's claim to originality can be established. Even « The Pigeon » owes much of its distinctive charm to the felicitous balance struck in the use of elements long and often considered as conflicting : a paradox in composition with its very imperfections turned to good account. In his other plays, despite the author's few incursions into the field of new technique (generally after some other playwright had already shown the way), we find none of the genius-like immoderation and iconoclastic audacity that raises a work of art, victoriously, over all dictates of traditional discipline.

Not that Galsworthy was lacking in the will to strive after something new, or addicted to following a path previously trodden for the reason that it had been once found to be easy and to lead to wordly success : respectful of his work, he gave always the best that was in him. Looking closely at his dramas, we realize that none is absolutely conservative, a disguised reiteration of the one before, or even the mere repetition of devices already tried and meant to be worked upon until improved to a state of satisfactory efficacy. Galsworthy was all the time perfecting his own method and each play seems to have been intended by him as a fresh departure. Yet to us each one appears rather as a final achievement, so polished up does it seem to have been, so well thought out. How many rough copies were wasted before a play stood forth in its final shape ? How many unsuccessful experiments in minor points of method, before they were brought to a satisfactory working ? « The Silver Box », showing such progress accomplished since the extremely poor and crude scenes of the unfinished MS. of « The Civilised », first suggests this question most forcibly. But afterwards ? We know the rapidity with which all these dramas were

composed, in what circumstances. It becomes accordingly impossible to contend that each of them was the outcome of long cogitation, endless furlishing up, prodigious consumption of midnight oil : Galsworthy did actually rush from one play to another. And this indeed is the enigma his work sets before us. Can it be that artistic discipline had become in him, from an ingrained habit of his mind, almost an instinct ?

But then, why does the suggestion of deliberate effort remain perceptible all through ? How is it that we have so frequently the feeling that technique plays in this art too great a part at the expense of spontaneousness ? That the author seems to cultivate in his audiences and his readers the purely intellectual appreciation of stagecraft too assiduously to allow them to be swept off their feet by a steady current of emotion, or even by an all-powerful flow of aesthetic rapture ? That most of his plays may be called instructive rather than irresistible or enchanting ? That they can easily be pulled to pieces, that they do ask to be pulled to pieces, and that if we yield to the temptation of searching into their cunning mechanism, we but seldom find the fire of true creative art as the motive power ? For all his sense of the theatre, we gather that Galsworthy was not, in his dramatic work, divinely inspired, or borne on the wings of passionate response to a tragic situation, or overpowered by some irrepressible vitality unwittingly imparted to his characters. And yet, in such occasional flights from academic rules, often lies the informal mastery of the truly great creator.

Now Galsworthy began to write for the stage at a time when the prophets of the renovation of the drama had been, and still were, clamouring for plays of an increasingly higher literary and intellectual level, and that, among other things, would bear being printed ; at a time when the low taste displayed by the average theatre-going audience was still the cause for much weeping and gnashing of teeth among indignant reformers ; at a time when several dramatic formulae, individually worn out, could easily be made to converge

into one. And he demonstrated that without any very daringly new departures, without any staggering innovations, something could indeed be done towards adapting the better traditions of the *pièce bien faite*, the violently sentimental appeal of the old melodrama, or the quick, concrete action of the very English popular farce, to the demands of the serious drama. He reduced the sensational element to a proportion compatible with truth ; he dealt in strong plots, without altogether renouncing his own methods as an artist in realism and as a painter of unexceptional human nature ; he allied imagination with skill ; and, withal, he expressed himself in a scenic language according to his own taste and tradition, -- simple, economical and tense, lively and all the more forceful for the judicious use of understatement. And so it fell to him to carry out something in the nature of a most useful synthesis.

By so doing, he very certainly contributed to the education of the theatre-going public, by developing its taste without obliging it abruptly to break with all its habits and cherished idols ; he raised it in its own self-esteem by raising the standard of the English stage ; neither the serious-minded nor the members of the early twentieth century intelligentsia need have been ashamed of attending performances of his plays. True, he did not discover wide expanses of new ground. True, his personality was not such as to exercise a decisive, lasting action on the destinies of the drama. But he made the work of more original playwrights more easy, by contributing to giving them more receptive audiences, and he accordingly stands forth, a notable figure among the new-school dramatists of his time. True, the genuine flame to be found in his novels is, in a great measure, lacking in his dramatic work : but his qualities are real, his sincerity and artistic dignity entire, his talent unquestionable. These virtues, this utility we may not deny him as a playwright, under the pretence that they were what they were and no more.

For where shall we be, all of us, if we are to be judged, not on our few achievements, but on our manifold omissions ?

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Among the books and articles mentioned in lists II and III, there are some that we have only cursorily perused ; others even we have been unable to see, owing to circumstances beyond our control that render research work in libraries momentarily impossible. For the same reason, this bibliography cannot pretend to be exhaustive.

I. List of the Plays of John Galsworthy

THE CIVILISED.

Written 1901.

THE SILVER BOX.

Written January-March 1906.

Produced September 25, 1906.

JOY.

Written end 1906 --- January 1907.

Produced September 24, 1907.

STRIFE.

Begun February 1907.

Produced March 9, 1909.

THE ELDEST SON.

Written Spring 1909.

Produced November 23, 1911.

THE LITTLE DREAM.

Written Spring 1909.

Produced April 15, 1911.

JUSTICE.

Written Summer 1909.

Produced February 21, 1910.

THE FUGITIVE.

Begun December 1910.

Produced September 16, 1913.

THE PIGEON.

Begun March 1911.

Produced January 30, 1912.

THE MOB.

Begun June 1911.
Produced March 30, 1914.

A BIT O' LOVE.

Written January-March 1914.
Produced May 25, 1915.

THE FOUNDATIONS.

Written August-October 1916.
Produced June 1917.

THE SKIN GAME.

Written June-July 1919.
Produced April 1920.

A FAMILY MAN.

Written end 1920 — February 1921.
Produced May 5, 1922.

WINDOWS.

Written end 1920 — January 1921.
Produced April 25, 1922.

LOYALTIES.

Written Summer 1921.
Produced March 8, 1922.

THE FOREST.

Written May-September 1922.
Produced March 6, 1921.

OLD ENGLISH.

Finished writing August 1924.
Produced October 21, 1924.

THE SHOW.

Produced July 1, 1925.

ESCAPE.

Finished writing February 25, 1926.
Produced August 12, 1926.

EXILED.

Written end 1928 — February 1929.
Produced June 19, 1929.

THE ROOF.

Begun early 1929.
Produced November 4, 1929.

SIX SHORT PLAYS :

THE LITTLE MAN.

Written November 1-6, 1913.
Published May 6, 1915.
Produced March 22, 1915.

HALL-MARKED.

Published May 6, 1915.

THE FIRST AND THE LAST.

Begun November 1914.
Published July 25, 1918.

DEFEAT.

Begun October 1916.

PUNCH AND GO.

Written end 1920 — January 1921.

THE SUN.

Written after the 1914-1918 War.

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